

THE ROLE OF STATUS IN ASIA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

by

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I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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Abstract

International Relations widely assumes that states pursue status, which may provide both emotional and strategic benefits. However, IR's existing status literature frequently renders the desire for status as a constant that cannot explain varying policy outcomes, and in many cases is overly focused on the connection between status concerns and war. The importance of status as a causal factor in IR may be better understood by considering that if states normally aspire to valued status roles, then threats to those roles can cause states to change policy settings to protect them. States with aspirations to the most prized status roles, notably major power status, should be especially prone to this.

This thesis considers three case studies involving major power aspirants, where key foreign policy decisions have been widely attributed to status concerns. As the epicentre of today's power transition, the Asia-Pacific region is the focus of the empirical analysis. The cases all take place during the immediate post-Cold War period, where the realignment of international polarity threw into question many established status roles. These were: Japan's 1992-93 bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council; China's 1996 signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; and India's 1998 Pokhran II nuclear tests. The project involved interviews with experts with close knowledge of the cases in each of the three countries, with a view to assessing leadership self-perceptions regarding national status at the moments in question.

The thesis outlines a three-phase approach to understanding status concerns and advances the central argument that the middle "status crisis" phase acts as the causal driver of policy change. There is generally a phase of normal status-seeking, during which a state accumulates prestige to win recognition for valued status roles; unexpected events may cause a status crisis, forcing a revaluation of the state's status position; and the state embarks on a phase of enhanced prestige-building, narrowing and intensifying its status ambitions. In short, changed status perceptions due to a status crisis can cause change to status-seeking policies, which become more provocative or risky than before. The case studies highlight examples of status-seeking involving material power, legitimacy, and institutional roles.

The thesis makes two contributions to the literature. First, the argument extends existing theories of status by better operationalising the concept. It adds to social identity theory by explaining the circumstances when states may adopt specific strategies to win status recognition, and it reinforces arguments that efforts to gain status recognition need not be conflictual or disruptive to the status quo. Second, the research enriches our understanding of the historical cases, some of which are mired in long-running debates about causal factors, and it offers ways for IR scholarship to account for the role of status in these episodes. With ongoing power shifts in the Asia-Pacific and beyond, status will continue to be a key concept in IR and this thesis provides us with new ways of understanding the relationship between status concerns and policy change.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
Setting the Scene.....	1
Overview of the thesis	5
Quick definitions.....	5
Opening up the status agenda in IR	7
Gaps in the scholarship – unresolved puzzles	11
Aim of the project	15
Central Argument.....	17
Research design	20
Approach to the research	21
Use of case studies.....	26
Case study selection.....	28
Case analysis methods and methodology	31
Outline of the thesis	34
 2. SITUATING THE THESIS IN THE LITERATURE.....	 37
Definitions.....	38
Prestige.....	39
Status.....	40
Attractions of status	42
Prestige and reputation.....	45
Discussion	46
Canonical and realist perspectives on prestige	47
Prestige in canonical writing.....	48
Prestige in classical realism	50
Status and hierarchy in IR.....	53
Major power status.....	53
Legitimacy and authority	57
Major directions of the contemporary literature	61
Social identity theory	62
Socially creative status strategies	65
Winning status recognition	66
Status recognition and conflict	69
Grounding this project	71

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	75
Purpose.....	75
Prestige in this thesis.....	77
Describing prestige	78
Examples of prestige-building	80
Criticism of prestige.....	82
Self-perceptions of prestige and status	84
Status roles.....	84
Social and perceptual considerations	86
Negotiation of prestige.....	87
Evaluating prestige	90
Communicating prestige	91
Decision-making and crises	94
Rational decision-making	94
Crises and revaluations	97
 4. JAPAN AND THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL, 1992-93.....	100
 SECTION A. EXISTING EXPLANATIONS	100
Introducing the case	100
Outline of events	103
Existing explanations	107
Prestige and status explanations	108
Instrumental foreign policy explanations	113
Domestic political explanations.....	115
Assessment of the literature as a baseline for status assumptions	117
Dignity and recognition	118
Foreign policy and domestic political aspects	121
Gaps and next steps.....	122
 SECTION B. ANALYSIS OF THE CASE	124
Analysing the case	124
The “normal” status-seeking phase.....	125
Japan’s status aims.....	126
The pattern of “normal” status-seeking	134
The Gulf War and Japan’s status crisis.....	138
The Gulf War	139
The aftermath of the Gulf War	141
Enhanced status-seeking: the bid for the Security Council seat	144

Domestic efforts and new agendas	145
Diplomatic campaigning.....	147
The reverse course	149
Notes on findings	150
Next steps.....	153
5. CHINA AND THE COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY, 1996.....	154
SECTION A: EXISTING EXPLANATIONS	154
Introducing the case	154
Outline of events	156
Existing explanations.....	160
Costliness of the decision	161
Instrumental explanations	164
China “learning” normative values.....	167
Assessment of the literature	170
Literature on China and status	170
Gaps and next steps.....	174
SECTION B: CASE ANALYSIS.....	176
Analysing the case	176
Normal status seeking: Before Tiananmen	178
Accepting nonproliferation norms	179
The post-1989 status crisis.....	182
Elements of the status crisis.....	183
The 1995-96 crisis and the “China threat” issue.....	185
Normative pressure on arms control	187
Enhanced status seeking: Joining the CTBT	189
China comes under pressure	192
Reasons the pressure mattered to Beijing	193
Notes on findings	195
Next steps.....	197
6. INDIA AND THE POKHRAN II NUCLEAR TESTS, 1998.....	199
SECTION A: EXISTING EXPLANATIONS	199
Introducing the case	199
Outline of events	201

Existing explanations	207
Security explanations	208
Prestige and status explanations	211
Domestic political explanations	214
Assessment of the literature	217
India's aspirations to great power status	218
Autonomy and non-alignment	219
Nuclear science	221
Gaps and next steps	224
SECTION B: CASE ANALYSIS.....	226
Analysing the case	226
Normal status seeking: India's pre-crisis pattern of behaviour	228
Elements of prestige building	229
The nuclear program during normal prestige-building	230
The status crisis: India reacts to arms control treaties	235
The situation leading up to the tests	235
The onset of the arms control treaties	237
Implications of the treaties	242
Enhanced status seeking: The nuclear tests	244
Rao nearly tests	244
The CTBT and the transitional period	246
The BJP victory and the decision to test	248
Notes on findings	252
Next steps	253
7. CONCLUSION	255
Results of the project	255
Review of findings	256
Findings of each case	257
Japan and the United Nations Security Council, 1992-93:	257
China and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty 1996:	258
India and the Pokhran II nuclear tests, 1998:	259
General findings	260
Analysing variables	262
Clarifying multiple roles	263
Crisis as a discovery process	264
Domestic constituencies	265
Implications of findings	266
Implications for scholarly IR	266
Implications for policy	270

Topics for future research	273
Beliefs	273
National identity conceptions	277
Prospect theory	278
Final comments	280
REFERENCES.....	283
List of interviews	283
Works cited	285

1. INTRODUCTION

Setting the Scene

The power shifts that are reshaping world politics are also driving national aspirations to status and recognition. China's President Xi Jinping has declared that it is time for China and the United States to build "a new type of great power relationship."¹ In India, Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist BJP calls for a resurgent India "to play its destined role in the comity of nations."² And in Japan, cabinet ministers speak of Japanese responsibility in contested regions such as the South China Sea as "it is natural for a great power like Japan to play a responsible role for the region."³ All of these statements reflect the way that politicians and peoples alike believe their states ought to hold special status in the international system. This thesis explores how and when those beliefs affect the way that states behave.

The moment of writing this thesis matters, because global power transitions are making the issue of status more relevant to core questions in International Relations. This power transition has seen the world move from a "unipolar moment" to a period in which not only China, but India, Brazil and other emerging economies are increasing their share of global production at the relative expense of the established developed powers.⁴ There is

¹ Quoted in the *New York Times*, 28 May 2013.

² Bharatiya Janata Party 2014 election manifesto, available at:

http://www.bjp.org/images/pdf_2014/full_manifesto_english_07.04.2014.pdf (accessed 24 July 2017).

³ Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera, quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, 11 July 2014, <https://search-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/docview/1544435603?accountid=8330> (accessed 24 July 2017).

⁴ A chart forecasting the economic growth of major Asian economies, and comparing them with Western economies, may be found at p. 53 of the Australian Government's *Australia in the Asian Century* white paper, available online at:

http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/docs/australia_in_the_asian_century_white_paper.pdf. For an expression of the "unipolar moment", see: Charles Krauthammer, 'The Unipolar Moment,' *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990). For a post-unipolar overview, see: Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008).

an active debate about whether this is inherently disruptive to global order. Some scholars argue that the United States could manage the transition and continue to promote a “hierarchical order with liberal characteristics,”⁵ but others contend that rising powers will try to carve out forms of hegemony “informed by their own histories, cultures, and social norms,” making harmony elusive, however materially attractive the US-led order has been.⁶ What seems likely is that the power shifts will at least make international order less cleanly defined than before. It is not necessary to adopt Richard Haas’ term “nonpolarity” (which he uses to describe a post-unipolar world), to concur with his broad point that: “A nonpolar world not only involves more actors but lacks the more predictable fixed structures and relationships that tend to define worlds of unipolarity, bipolarity, or multipolarity.” In this real-world context, the relative status of states is an ever more important topic of inquiry.

Status is important to current international relations debates because it helps explain whether or not power shifts will lead to conflict. Many perspectives illustrate this. Translating scholarly debates about power transitions for a contemporary and popular audience, Hugh White says of Sino-American rivalry that “the main motor for disagreement is not the substantive issue, but the way each side sees it as a test of relative status in the Western Pacific.”⁷ Or, putting matters in the language of scholarly IR, “if a rising power can be integrated within international institutions, it is possible to avoid the conflicts that anarchy’s premium on hedging against vulnerability might otherwise induce.”⁸ This is why, in a notable book on regional order-building, Evelyn

⁵ G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 6, 343-5.

⁶ Charles A. Kupchan, ‘The Normative Foundations of Hegemony and the Coming Challenge to Pax Americana,’ *Security Studies* 23, no. 2 (2014): 224.

⁷ Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why America Should Share Power* (Collingwood, Victoria: Black Incorporated, 2012), 122.

⁸ Avery Goldstein, ‘Power Transitions, Institutions, and China’s Rise in East Asia: Theoretical Expectations and Evidence,’ *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 4-5 (2007): 646.

Goh argues that “processes of rank competition, assurance and integration will present the most important sources of order renegotiation in East Asia.”⁹ To summarise the issue, one recent study notes that “the ongoing scholarly and public discussion reveals a level of anxiety about rising powers and world order that is hard to explain if people only care about economic prosperity and basic national security.”¹⁰

The renewed interest in status has prompted a wave of scholarly publishing on the topic.¹¹ But the puzzle for scholarly IR is that while status is widely accepted to be important, research to date still gives us little guidance on how the idea of status connects to states’ decisions and policies. In other words, how and when does status act as a variable in policy outcomes? Even including very recent work,¹² the existing literature does little to provide an operational theory or causal chain between status and state behaviour. Among the key themes in the literature, explored in more detail in the literature review chapter, some scholars see the desire for prestige as a constant, which cannot explain varying outcomes. Others develop the main theoretical approach in this topic, social identity theory (SIT), yet this theory’s causal basis in the psychological attachments of people to their social group is difficult to translate to IR’s sphere of

⁹ Evelyn Goh, *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 225.

¹⁰ Deborah Welch Larson, T. V. Paul, and William C Wohlforth, ‘Status and World Order,’ in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C Wohlforth (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3.

¹¹ In order of publication, recent works of interest include: William C. Wohlforth, ‘Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War,’ *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (2009); Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, ‘Status Seekers : Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy,’ *International Security* 34, no. 4 (2010); Thomas J. Volgy et al., eds., *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics : Global and Regional Perspectives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Reinhard Wolf, ‘Respect and Disrespect in International Politics: The Significance of Status Recognition,’ *International Theory* 3, no. 1 (2011); Steve Wood, ‘Prestige in World Politics: History, Theory, Expression,’ *International Politics* 50, no. 3 (2013); Allan Dafoe, Jonathan Renshon, and Paul Huth, ‘Reputation and Status as Motives for War,’ *Annual Review of Political Science* 17 (2014); T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Joshua Freedman, ‘Status Insecurity and Temporality in World Politics,’ *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 4 (2016); Jonathan Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ *International Organization* 70, no. 3 (2016).

¹² Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status : Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2017).

defined and unequal states.¹³ In addition, much research about status in IR focuses on whether a desire for greater status recognition leads to conflict, yet this limits the concept of status to dealing with only a narrow range of IR situations.¹⁴

This chapter outlines the research project and explains its methodology. The outline explains that the topic of status is important to IR not only because of international power shifts, but because these shifts are largely toward Asia, where international status hierarchies have played a longstanding role. Noting that the main gap in the literature concerns the causal function of status, the aim of this thesis is to fill the gap by building a working model of decision-makers' status concerns and their effect on policy. This leads up to the central argument of the thesis, which is that in normal periods states cautiously accumulate prestige, but when faced with a crisis in their perceptions of national status, they will embark on a bolder phase of enhanced prestige-building. The second main section of this chapter explains why the project is built around a comparison of three empirical case studies (covering post-Cold War episodes in Japan, China and India) and uses a broadly interpretivist approach. Overall, this means the project takes an interpretivist approach that makes use of pluralist methods and has a strong resonance (especially given the subject matter of the thesis) with the neoclassical

¹³ A point made by Wohlforth: Wohlforth, 'Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War,' 36. For key works in IR that draw on SIT, see: Jonathan Mercer, 'Anarchy and Identity,' *International Organization* 49, no. 2 (1995); Rawi Abdelal et al., 'Identity as a Variable,' *Perspectives on Politics* 4, no. 4 (2006); Anne L. Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Larson and Shevchenko, 'Status Seekers.' For a review of major social psychology literature on SIT (pre-2000, but influencing recent IR scholarship on this topic), see: Rupert Brown, 'Social Identity Theory: Past Achievements, Current Problems and Future Challenges,' *European Journal of Social Psychology* 30, no. 6 (2000).

¹⁴ Some notable recent works that focus on status and conflict include: Wohlforth, 'Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War.'; Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status.'; Allan Dafoe and Devin Caughey, 'Honor and War: Southern US Presidents and the Effects of Concern for Reputation,' *World Politics* 68, no. 2 (2016); *ibid.*; Renshon, 'Status Deficits and War.'; Renshon, *Fighting for Status*.

realist research agenda.¹⁵ A third section concludes this introduction with an outline of the whole thesis.

Overview of the thesis

At the centre of this thesis are three case studies involving major power aspirants, where major foreign policy decisions were widely attributed to status concerns. These are: Japan's 1992-93 bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council; China's 1996 signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; and India's 1998 Pokhran II nuclear tests. The fieldwork involved interviews with experts with close knowledge of the cases in each of the three countries, with a view to assessing leadership self-perceptions regarding national status at the moments in question. The remainder of this introduction explains the case selection and the project's conceptual and theoretical focus. But first, it will help to define prestige and status, two terms that recur throughout this study.

Quick definitions

While the literature review chapter deals with definitions and their place in the literature in more detail, it is important to the main argument of the thesis to distinguish prestige and status. Prestige is a *general* belief that an actor has positive qualities. The belief is "general" or "higher-level" in the sense that actors believe that most other actors

¹⁵ As outlined in Chapter 3, key works in the neoclassical realist research agenda include: Gideon Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,' *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998); Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

attribute the positive qualities to the relevant actor. It may therefore be seen as a social perception or as public recognition. It has the important implication that an actor may be perceived as prestigious even among observers who do not themselves consider the actor to have a good reputation.¹⁶ This thesis argues that actors acquire prestige in the expectation of receiving status recognition – in other words, status is a product of prestige. Status is likewise a general belief, but specifically about an actor's position in a social hierarchy. Once this status position is recognised by others, an actor may gain rights, respect, and patterns of deference from its status. One reason states seek status recognition is because they believe that it informs expectations that members of a group will generally defer to higher-status actors.¹⁷

Making this distinction between prestige and status helps to reveal the underlying mechanism at the centre of this thesis. The existing literature tends to blur the two concepts, referring for example to states that are insecure about their status embarking on policies to conspicuously boost their prestige.¹⁸ These kinds of arguments imply an important connection that needs to be explored. The connection is that prestige is directly linked to activity, while status is an asset that is built up by that activity. This opens up a useful way of explaining the role of status in events, and allows a greater degree of precision in analysing when and how status in particular influences policy choices. This thesis argues that for reasons of history, culture or necessity, states put value upon certain roles that are generally recognised as carrying high status. States will then engage in prestige-earning activity in order to gain recognition for those status

¹⁶ The best single explanation of prestige as a general belief is given by O'Neill: Barry O'Neill, *Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige (Cowles Foundation Discussion Paper No. 1560)* (Cowles Foundation for Discussion in Economics, 2006). Renshon, 'Status Deficits and War,' 518-19; Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and World Order,' 16; Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status,' 364.

¹⁷ For a discussion of status recognition as a general belief, see: Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status,' 375.

¹⁸ Xiaoyu Pu and Randall L Schweller, 'Status Signalling, Multiple Audiences and China's Blue-Water Naval Ambition,' in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C Wohlforth (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

roles. Prestige-building is the means, subject to policy decisions, while status is the ends, the ultimate valuable asset or pay-off. The key here is that just as there are many different status roles that might be valuable, there will be equally many kinds of prestige-earning activities. Once this distinction is made, then we can start to identify connections between status concerns and state behaviour.

Opening up the status agenda in IR

Over the past decade, the study of status has become increasingly topical in IR scholarship for two reasons. First, power shifts away from United States hegemony have given a fresh lease of life to the study of rising powers and power transition.¹⁹ Second, the rise of China and the changing role of Japan has renewed the interest of scholarly IR, including IR theorists, in the East Asian region.

Just as the prospect of global power shifts has increased interest in rising powers and power transitions, this area of study has also witnessed an increase in scholarly attention given to questions of status in IR. This is because conditions of power transition involve the threat of conflict over dissatisfaction with both material and non-material benefits in the international system. As one review of China's rise and power transition notes, the distribution of international benefits includes "control over territory, spheres of influence, access to resources, or status in the system."²⁰ An implication of this, as William Wohlforth notes, is that in many cases "the motivation driving decisions for war is relative satisfaction with the global or regional hierarchy."²¹

¹⁹ See for example the edited volume: G. John Ikenberry, *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

²⁰ Taylor Fravel, 'International Relations Theory and China's Rise: Assessing China's Potential for Territorial Expansion,' *International Studies Review* 12, no. 4 (2010): 506.

²¹ Wohlforth, 'Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War,' 28.

Another implication of shifting power redistributing international benefits is that states such as China and Russia are more likely to participate in institutions of global governance if their status aspirations are recognised: “Chinese and Russian foreign policies since the end of the Cold War have been motivated by a consistent objective—to restore both countries’ great power status.”²² As David A. Lake writes: “It will be the interaction between the quest for status by rising powers and the granting of status, largely by the United States, that will determine whether states are integrated into the existing order or choose to challenge it.”²³ Thus, while power shifts have led to increased interest in status, this in turn could be seen as simply refocusing scholars on some of the foundational concerns of IR. As T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson and Wohlforth ask in their recent book on status, key questions in IR include: why rising powers seek status, what are the mechanisms of status adjustment and accommodation, and whether status aspirations can be accommodated without violence.²⁴ These all point to how the study of status can be useful to power transition debates.

It is also timely to take a fresh approach to status in IR because IR scholarship itself is increasingly focused on East Asia. Scholars have been particularly interested in the question of whether the culture and history of East Asia inclines the region toward a more hierarchical vision of international politics than was normally the case in the periods of European history that previously laid the groundwork for IR theorising.²⁵

²² Larson and Shevchenko, ‘Status Seekers,’ 66.

²³ David A Lake, ‘Great Power Hierarchies and Strategies in Twenty-First Century World Politics,’ in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A Simmons (London: SAGE Publications, 2013), 563.

²⁴ Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, *Status in World Politics*.

²⁵ See: David C Kang, ‘Getting Asia Wrong,’ *International Security* 27, no. 4 (2003); David C Kang, ‘The Theoretical Roots of Hierarchy in International Relations,’ *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 58, no. 3 (2004); Alastair Iain Johnston, ‘What (If Anything) Does East Asia Tell Us About International Relations Theory?,’ *Annual Review of Political Science* 15, no. Journal Article (2012); Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, ‘Why Is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory? An Introduction,’ *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7, no. 3 (2007).

Whereas core concepts in IR such as the balance of power derived from European history, East Asian history for long periods involved a Sinocentric international hierarchy. While some scholars have argued that East Asia's lack of a balance of power will lead to instability,²⁶ David Kang points out: "Many scholars are increasingly arguing that the international system is actually characterized by inequalities and differentiation, not sameness. In this new literature, states are differentiated according to functions, specializations, and degrees of authority among them."²⁷ Kang has argued that hierarchy involves a system of international politics based around a central power involving shared expectations of rights and responsibilities for both the central and subordinate powers. The argument is that shared expectations, experiences and history, rather than a balance of power, offset the security dilemma. He says:

Asian international relations conform more to a pattern of hierarchy than to a pattern of balancing. Hierarchy is more stable than realists have allowed, and in international relations it is often the absence of hierarchy that leads to conflict.²⁸

This approach is said to explain real-world situations. For example, Japan does not further re-arm to balance China, China and the United States have very different approaches to Taiwan, and Vietnam and Korea do not obviously balance China.²⁹

In addition to the two contemporary themes above, status is important to IR because it is so useful to key theoretical approaches. One reason why status is, in Jason Davidson's words, "one of the most sought after goods in international politics,"³⁰ is because it is often a recognised marker of a state's power. Indeed status' "stickiness" saves states the

²⁶ Aaron L. Friedberg, 'Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia,' *International Security* 18, no. 3 (1993).

²⁷ David C Kang, 'International Relations Theory and East Asian History: An Overview,' *Journal of East Asian Studies* 13, no. 2 (2013): 183.

²⁸ Kang, 'The Theoretical Roots of Hierarchy in International Relations,' 339.

²⁹ David C Kang, 'Hierarchy and Stability in Asian International Relations,' in *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific* (2003), 177.

³⁰ Jason Davidson, *The Origins of Revisionist and Status-Quo States* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

need to constantly reaffirm their power.³¹ On specific theories of realism, the fundamental passions involved in the “prestige motive” help explain the fear that motivates the security dilemma. As David Markey explains: “Adding the prestige motive to the realist security dilemma framework provides a spark behind international competition—an underlying reason for the fear which is tragically magnified by an inability to achieve lasting security.”³² This helps to explain why a state of war could continue even under the defensive realist paradigm of plentiful security.

Constructivist approaches benefit from the use of status to explain how states identify themselves and engage with international norms. States can seek various forms of status such as membership of valued groups, whether on the grounds of power and wealth or of political, economic or cultural affinity. Anne Clunan gives the examples of the former such as “ranks of the great powers” or the “developed nations,” and examples of the latter include being a “civilized country,” a “market economy,” a member of the “Islamic nation,” “Big Brother to all Slavs,” or “the leader of the free world.”³³ Status is also a driver of norm adoption. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink give the example of Japan being open to endorsing international norms about refugees because it is “insecure” about its international political role. They note: “If states seek to enhance their reputation or esteem, we would expect states that are insecure about their international status or reputation to embrace new international norms most eagerly and thoroughly.”³⁴ Using the definitions of this project, that is to say that a state might embrace norms in order to build up its general reputation or esteem, which is to say its

³¹ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and World Order,' 19.

³² Daniel Markey, 'Prestige and the Origins of War: Returning to Realism's Roots,' *Security Studies* 8, no. 4 (1999): 165.

³³ Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence*, 31.

³⁴ Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,' *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 906.

prestige (once established as a general belief); the state would then aspire to recognition as, say, a “moral exemplar”.³⁵

The significance of investigating status lies in its role in explaining power transitions, in IR’s increased interest in the Asia-Pacific region, and in its contribution to core questions of IR theory. Yet, as one recent study noted, the concept of status “remains murky”, especially in terms of how it becomes recognised.³⁶ Likewise, a review of the topic concluded that status “seems to be understudied.”³⁷ As a result, for such an important concept as status, it is necessary to turn to the many gaps in the scholarship on the issue.

Gaps in the scholarship – unresolved puzzles

Despite the growing importance and prominence of the topic, the IR literature leaves key puzzles about status unsolved. Critically, while recent work has highlighted the significance of status to IR, there is still very little literature on how status actually functions. Broadly speaking, status in IR has been increasingly theorised, but remains poorly explained – recent scholarship has aimed to show causal connections between status and events, but we still lack laws or hypotheses showing how causation occurs.³⁸

As Jonathan Renshon puts it: “Although there is considerable agreement within the political science discipline and the foreign policy community that status matters in

³⁵ The term “moral exemplar” has been used in terms of Indian status aspirations. See: Ian Hall, 'The Persistence of Nehruvianism in India’s Strategic Culture,' in *Strategic Asia 2016-17: Understanding Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Alison Szalwinski, and Michael Wills (Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2016), 154.

³⁶ Thomas J Volgy et al., 'Major Power Status in International Politics,' in *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics: Global and Regional Perspectives*, ed. Thomas J Volgy, et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 2-3.

³⁷ Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status,' 389.

³⁸ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 9.

world affairs, there is little focused research on how and when it matters.”³⁹ The key unsolved puzzles that motivate this thesis include: difficulties in demonstrating that status is a variable rather than a constant; problems showing that social identity theory provides more important causation than IR’s traditional explanations for events; over-emphasis on conflictual outcomes from status issues; the continued focus on historical European data to support hypotheses about status; and the general lack of comparison between status explanations and competing explanations for events or outcomes.

The first outstanding puzzle exists because some scholars are so keen to assert the importance of status that they treat it as a near-universal factor in IR. The problem is that this turns status into a constant, rather than guiding us on how it might work as an independent variable or causal factor in outcomes. For example, one scholar has noted that “prestige, whether denoted as glory, honour or reputation, is a motive force behind the behaviour of individuals, statesmen and nations.”⁴⁰ According to this, prestige should be seen as an underlying factor explaining the beliefs about threat that make states ever-concerned about their security. Unfortunately, such an underlying factor would be a constant that cannot explain specific policy decisions taken by states in the pursuit of their security.⁴¹ Unless we can resolve this puzzle, status might be an unusable concept: perhaps a desire for status is a universal aspect of human nature that we cannot correlate to any specific events.

The second literature gap area concerns the main theory in the field, social identity theory, which is under-specified about how social concerns lead to changes in state

³⁹ Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 514.

⁴⁰ Markey, ‘Prestige and the Origins of War,’ 155.

⁴¹ Jacques Hymans uses this argument to question whether a prestige motive can explain the decision of states to acquire nuclear weapons. See: Jacques E. C. Hymans, ‘Why Do States Acquire Nuclear Weapons? Comparing the Cases of India and France,’ in *Nuclear India in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. D.R. SarDesai and Raju GC Thomas (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 143.

behaviour. IR scholars working on social identity theory point to a base of psychological research showing that people tend to identify with their social group and wish to see favourable comparisons between their group and other relevant social groups. But when it comes to demonstrating a link between the psychology of individuals and the behaviour of states, the literature frequently asserts that we should assume that decision-makers identify with their state and gain utility from the state's international status.⁴² For example, social identity theory assumes that decision-makers value high national status because it enhances people's collective self-esteem.⁴³ The issue is that this does not explain how or whether decision-makers rank self-esteem against traditional standards of national interest such as security or prosperity.

The third major gap in the literature is that much work on status focuses on situations where there is a perception a state's status has not been adequately recognised. Studies of this "status inconsistency" too frequently assume that the pursuit of status places states at risk of conflict, or at least intensifies their competition and rivalry.⁴⁴ Some studies highlight the risk that states facing status inconsistency will resort to conflict out of frustration, while others take the opposite approach and consider whether states might engage in conflict in order to increase their status.⁴⁵ However, this does not address the wide range of behaviour that states engage in to increase their status, aside from conflict. Looking only at the states that are case study subjects in this thesis, India has varied between seeking the status of leader of the non-aligned movement, to being a declared nuclear weapons state; China was once (championing the developing world) a vociferous opponent of the nuclear nonproliferation regime, but became a supporter of

⁴² Wohlforth, 'Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War,' 37.

⁴³ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and World Order,' 18.

⁴⁴ Renshon provides a table showing eight studies of status inconsistency, all of which have as their dependent variable some form of war, conflict or threat perception. Renshon, 'Status Deficits and War,' 517.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

it; and Japan has variously pursued and stepped back from a campaign to gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. All these behaviours have been related to national status, yet some involve security confrontations and others do not. IR needs a concept of status that can take all this behaviour into account.

A fourth issue that has held back progress in this area is that most theoretical studies cast back to traditional sources of IR theory, such as power transition and rivalry in Europe in the century to 1914.⁴⁶ Meanwhile country studies of the major rising or aspirant powers, such as Japan, India, China, or Russia, seldom engage with this theoretical work on status.⁴⁷ There is a value on an empirical study that focuses an examination of the theories of status on the actual behaviour of contemporary rivalrous powers.

Overall, the key issue in the existing literature is that there is little analysis of how significant a factor status was, if any, compared with other causal factors leading to specific policy decisions. Nor is there sufficient examination of the processes that lead status considerations to become a major causal explanation for events. While status understandings are reached intersubjectively, suggesting each instance is somewhat distinct, there is little research about consistencies between episodes of status-seeking that could help us identify patterns in status' role in IR. A key gap in the literature is the need to connect IR's theoretical literature on status with the abundant literature on contemporary rising and aspirant powers. Filling such gaps would provide not only better theory but research that is closely linked to current policy debates about shifting power.

⁴⁶ Examples using 1815-1914 data include Wohlforth (2009) and Renshon (2016).

⁴⁷ For example, as of July 2017, a database search showed more than 100 scholarly peer-reviewed articles published in the past decade including both "China" and "great power" in their title, but only one of these (Larson, 2015) refers anywhere in its text to the major theory of status, social identity theory.

Aim of the project

This thesis is narrowly aimed at exploring causal mechanisms explaining the role of status concerns in producing policy change. As the preceding section emphasises, there are wide gaps in the literature on status and no single research project could address them all. However this study aims to provide a more conceptualised and operational account of status, by questioning how status concerns played out as a factor in a series of historical case studies. To focus the project further, this thesis is based on the distinction drawn above between status and prestige. This definitional distinction lets this project home in on the link between decision-makers' concerns about status on one hand, and prestige-building activity on the other. This makes the project specifically about building a working model of decision-makers' self-perceptions of status, and what results from it. The project looks specifically at this point of linkage to identify the circumstances in which status plays a causal role in IR.

As the explanation of research design sets out in more detail below, the aim of this project necessitates an eclectic research methodology. This is because the project is trying to connect individual beliefs (decision-makers' concerns about their state's status) with policy outcomes (prestige-building activity). A study of beliefs defies a purely positivist methodology, and the project does not attempt a quantitative analysis of status-related behaviour. It requires an interpretive approach that accepts that individuals have agency yet are influenced by historical inheritances and the dilemmas of modifying those as events demand.⁴⁸ Having said this, policy outcomes become the

⁴⁸ Mark Bevir, Oliver Daddow, and Ian Hall, 'Introduction: Interpreting British Foreign Policy,' *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 15, no. 2 (2013): 167.

stuff of historical events, which call for empirical study – most likely through the comparison of cases in order to find generalisable commonalities. This combination of the interpretive and the empirical opens up space for conceptual innovation.

Given the specific focus here, it is worth clarifying a number of matters that the thesis is not trying to address. First, the mechanism of interest is decision-makers' perceptions of their own states' status. Certainly, status arises intersubjectively, so people's beliefs about their state's status necessarily incorporate judgements about what other actors believe. But the purpose of using case studies is to explore what decision-makers chose to do for their own states, not to show whether a state gained or lost status from events. In other words, we are interested in when decision makers believed that a particular course of action would result in an increase in their state's prestige, but not whether this belief turned out to be correct.

Second, the project is not primarily about testing social identity theory and its connection to status. This thesis builds on social identity theory, but aims to work on causal mechanisms that are more specific than most of this theoretical work published to date. Third, the project does not try to rework debates about whether status is pursued for instrumental or intrinsic motives. These debates run the risk of circularity, because being recognised for high status may give a state influence, which is a practical benefit, yet at the same time having a great degree of influence may also be psychologically rewarding. Recognising that such attributes are inextricable, one study of status notes that: "Seemingly irrational psychological and social processes may be the very mechanisms by which strategic commitments are constructed."⁴⁹ Finally, this project is not trying to recontest debates about whether status compared with other causes was the

⁴⁹ Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status,' 383.

determining factor in cases. It will research cases where the literature already assumes status was an important factor for consideration. Rather than trying to champion status as a cause, the project is interested in how concern about status affected decision-makers' perceptions, so it assumes that status is just one of several factors that lead to final outcomes.

As well as developing new causal explanations for the role of status, this thesis has secondary policy and empirical aims. It looks at the nuances of foreign policy decisions made in states that are currently of key relevance in debates about the power transition underway in the Asia-Pacific. The empirical side of the thesis will contribute to our understanding of foreign policy decisions in key states of interest, in addition to conceptual advances it makes showing how status concerns cause policy outcomes.

Central Argument

The starting point of this thesis is that decision-makers place a value on possessing high status, and they support this by pursuing prestige-building policies consistent with that valuation. Specifically, a high-status position in a social hierarchy can be described as a status role – the role itself may vary widely, but invariably involves the translation of accumulated prestige into a recognised social role perceived as delivering status benefits including rights, respect and the expectation of deference. These perceived benefits are the basis for states' valuations.

The central argument of the thesis is that the onset of a "status crisis" can force decision-makers to reassess these status valuations. This leads to a point of variation

where the crisis changes decision-makers' perceptions about how securely the state holds its valued status roles, and this causes decision-makers to change policies to compensate, by increasing the level of prestige-building activity. The research conducted for this project, including interviewing practitioners involved with, and close to, policy decisions made at the time in each country, highlighted the way that this variation takes place through three major phases. These are identified as: normal status-seeking; the status crisis; and enhanced prestige-earning. Fieldwork on each of the three case studies found these distinct phases in operation, and they are described conceptually here.

Normal status-seeking: The key to this baseline phase is that decision-makers form beliefs not simply about how high their state's standing should be, but about the specific status roles that are valuable to them. Prestige, for decision-makers, meets the definition of a general belief by actors that the state has positive qualities, but the nature of those qualities are those that are relevant to upholding the valued status role. This explains starkly differing policy outcomes, because a state seeking the status of autonomous major power might find prestige in the pursuit of material power such as military capabilities, while a state that saw its status as tied up with its legitimacy might even sacrifice military capabilities. The reasons a state settles upon particular definitions of status may result from a combination of history, geography and culture, and the term "strategic culture" is one way of describing a state's orientation towards certain status roles. However, the argument of this thesis is that once states have established status goals, they support those goals through appropriate policies. The essential argument is that this period of normal status-seeking involves policies selected according to risk-benefit analyses. Decision-makers draw upon beliefs and traditions to decide the value of particular status roles, and therefore what costs should be paid in seeking them.

These costs may be financial, domestic-political or internationally-political. Decision-makers set parameters to earn enough prestige to support status interests, but these policies are generally sustainable and low-risk in nature.

The status crisis: The second phase takes place when decision-makers become aware that a certain status role has become threatened. The cases studied in this project showed this realisation most starkly when the threat to status was unexpected and put decision-makers under almost immediate pressure. This thesis calls the phase a “status crisis” because it conforms closely to classic definitions of crisis in IR – as Janice Gross Stein writes: “Crisis has traditionally been defined as a threat to basic values that simultaneously creates a sense of urgency and uncertainty among policy makers.”⁵⁰ The key causal connection between this crisis and outcomes lies in the vital role crises play in crystallising beliefs about changed circumstances. Robert Jervis sees this arising because the volume of discrepant information generated by a crisis is too great for decision-makers to absorb into existing worldviews: “In politics, sudden events influence images more than do slow developments.”⁵¹ A crisis, in other words, is a catalyst for reassessing foreign policy goals and strategies.⁵² In this case, the crisis triggers a reassessment of how intensively the state needs to acquire prestige in order to support its valued status roles.

Enhanced prestige-earning: The final phase is where decision-makers carry out policies in line with the reassessment forced by the status crisis. The key to this phase is that the objective – the valued status role – remains the same, but decision-makers believe that

⁵⁰ Janice Gross Stein, ‘Crisis Management: Looking Back to Look Forward,’ *Political Psychology* 29, no. 4 (2008): 554.

⁵¹ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1976), 308.

⁵² Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 5.

due to the threat to this role, the state must earn additional prestige in order to secure recognition of this status. The essential change in policy is that decision-makers shift their calculus on the risk-return trade-off required. Faced with greater threats to valued status roles, decision-makers accept greater risks in the policies they pursue to support them. An essential finding is that a new calculus in regards to enhancing prestige-earning does not necessarily mean conflict with other states. In fact, because status is a socially derived good, the findings support a more plausible theory that states most often act within existing systems of order to protect their status.⁵³

A key implication of this main argument is that discussion of status, crises and dissatisfaction should not be overly focused on armed conflict. While it is true that some states will have security-related status concerns that may lead to armed confrontation, status relates to many other areas of international relations. In this thesis, the case studies broaden our knowledge base for analysing status crises of different kinds, from material power to legitimacy to multilateral institutionalism.

Research design

Within the broader research theme – analysing the role of status in Asian inter-state relations – this thesis focuses on a specific research puzzle of when and how concerns about status lead to changes in policy. As the project was trying to identify why these status concerns may be important in some cases rather than others, this called for an analytically eclectic research design. This allows for the project being both about beliefs and perceptions, and about empirical evidence that these beliefs and perceptions lead to

⁵³ We may say that status aspirations often lead to “pro-social” rather than antisocial outcomes.

policy outcomes. As will be explained below, this places the project broadly in the context of the neoclassical realist research agenda.

On one hand, this study needs to describe when and how decision-makers think about their state's status, develop beliefs about that status being valuable, and perceive threats to such a valued position. This meant that elements of interpretivism would be important to the study, because it ultimately was concerned not so much with the facts of historical events, but with explaining how decision-makers thought about those events and chose to respond to them. On the other hand, the project needed to identify evidence that when these status concerns became critical, decision-makers take action in the form of policies to enhance their prestige-building. Identifying empirical examples of this decision-making process would confirm the broad hypothesis, but would also provide valuable information about how exactly status concerns are translated into policy choices. For this reason the project used a case study method, as the project's key concern was about how status functions. As John Gerring notes, "case studies, if well-constructed, allow one to peer into the box of causality to the intermediate causes lying between some cause and its purported effect."⁵⁴ This called for process-tracing cases in detail. It uses a small number of cases, and through induction aims to propose new causal explanations that account for all the cases.⁵⁵

Approach to the research

Essentially, the thesis is trying to identify whether changes to decision-makers' status perceptions cause states to adopt new policies to build prestige and thereby protect

⁵⁴ John Gerring, 'What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?', *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 2 (2004): 348.

⁵⁵ Herbert J Rubin and Irene S Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publications, 2005), 240-41.

status roles. This means that the thesis is about the choices of decision-makers, and in turn about how to assess the decision-makers' key beliefs. These beliefs include whether their state's status matters to them, whether that status is under any threat, and whether they should do anything about it. Thus, the project is a study of elite self-perceptions and their role as a causal mechanism in status-related events. As a result, this is a theoretically pluralist project that combines interpretive methodology with a case study analysis of causal connections.⁵⁶ Because the case study analysis is a study of perceptions, it is very much informed by the neoclassical realist research program.

The interpretivist methodology is important because traditionally positivist political science methods have run into difficulty studying beliefs and social understandings.

One recent review of the IR literature on status noted the methodological challenges of studying status, especially when it comes to distinguishing status motivations from others such as material interests:

A large body of contemporary work—spanning constructivist, realist, and rationalist approaches, formal and informal theory, statistical and qualitative evidence, experimental (field, survey, and laboratory) and observational designs—continues to investigate reputation and status. However, studying these concepts in a scientific manner faces a number of challenges intrinsic to the study of beliefs and motives more generally. Beliefs and motives are not directly observable, are subject to psychological and strategic biases in their expression, and are theoretically complex and context specific; furthermore, their behavioural implications are subject to substantial selection effects. Perhaps as a result, a coherent conceptual framework for these phenomena has remained elusive.⁵⁷

Noting the above, this project (in Chapter 3) sets out its own conceptual framework, clarifying what it means when it argues that actors accumulate, assess and value prestige and status.

⁵⁶ For a general defence of theoretical pluralism, see Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Theoretical Pluralism in IR: Possibilities and Limits,' in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A Simmons (London: SAGE Publications, 2013), 235-36.

⁵⁷ Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status,' 372.

This thesis understands the interpretive approach to be a focus on the meanings and beliefs that frame actions. The thesis researches the beliefs and motives of those who are involved in each case study, and it assumes that these people act on their beliefs and preferences. The key to approaching the puzzle in this thesis is that while the project searches for a causal connection between events, the events themselves have to be interpreted. As described above, the key to the events is how decision-makers believed they mattered, in this case in terms of national status. Thus this is an example of an interpretive research design that “does not start from a cause-and-effect puzzle, but rather engages with a very different type of puzzle that can be described as an ontological puzzle,”⁵⁸ that is, one that searches for the meaning of the events observed.

While an interpretive approach is essential to this subject matter, it is important to stress that this project does not embark on the approach that Mark Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes call post-structuralist or postmodern.⁵⁹ The thesis assumes that while people cannot escape all social influence, they can act creatively, and the project also assumes that decision-makers can select their beliefs and actions. For example, the thesis accepts the importance of traditions, a key element of interpretivism, but also allows individual choice:

People necessarily arrive at their beliefs, and perform their actions, against the background of a tradition that influences those beliefs and actions, but they are also creative agents who have the capacity to reason and act innovatively against the background of that tradition.⁶⁰

New beliefs pose dilemmas for existing beliefs, but tradition allows for the possibility that people adapt and develop their heritage, as they try to organise their beliefs to fit their own notion of best belief. Thus this study assumes people retain agency, which is

⁵⁸ Christopher K. Lamont, *Research Methods in International Relations* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2015), 43.

⁵⁹ Mark Bevir and R.A.W Rhodes, 'Interpretive Theory,' in *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, ed. David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 139-40.

⁶⁰ Mark Bevir, Oliver Daddow, and Ian Hall, 'Introduction,' in *Interpreting Global Security*, ed. Mark Bevir, Oliver Daddow, and Ian Hall (Routledge, 2014), 6.

one reason the case study approach and the search for causal connection is relevant to this project.

Some interpretive approaches are not concerned with causal analysis, instead focusing on “elucidating the meaning of behaviour” or critiquing use of power.⁶¹ However, the goal set by this project is to explain policy change. Even when it concerns events driven by actors’ beliefs, this thesis is seeking “at least some evidence that the actors actually perceive the benefits and acted for the reasons posited by the theory.”⁶² In addition, Christopher Lamont’s analysis of interpretive research design helps explain why this project’s theoretical pluralism includes the use of interpretivism as well as empiricism. Lamont notes that on the one hand, a project seeking to determine why wars occur would be empirical, while one trying to understand the social meaning underlying warfare would be interpretive.⁶³ On the other hand, he recognises that there can be overlap between the two approaches, as when constructivists use empirical or positivist methods to argue that norms and ideas have explanatory power.⁶⁴ This thesis is very much in the position that interpretation is necessary to understand what decision-makers believe status means, but empirical methods such as comparative case studies are required to study the link between these beliefs and real-world outcomes.

In taking an eclectic approach, this thesis is informed not only by interpretivism but also by the work of IR positivists studying perceptions as a variable contributing to policy outcomes. For example, Robert Jervis bases his key arguments on the idea that beliefs

⁶¹ Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures : Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 4-5.

⁶² Craig Parsons, 'Constructivism and Interpretive Theory,' in *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, ed. David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 85-86.

⁶³ Lamont, *Research Methods in International Relations*, 39-40.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 48, note 9.

and perceptions can assume the status of reality.⁶⁵ In this tradition of research, sometimes called neoclassical realism, perceptions may be seen as a medium-term variable, or as a key intervening variable, between states' material power and policy outcomes.⁶⁶ While the political science methodology is quite different, in practical terms this approach covers remarkably similar ground to that of interpretivists. This is highlighted in a recent volume on neoclassical realism's theoretical underpinnings:

[Neoclassical realism] stresses the primacy of the international system. States construct foreign policy with an eye to the external environment above all other considerations, as realists maintain. Whether and how they respond to international challenges may be affected by other variables, be they domestic political variables of the type emphasized by liberals or ideational or cultural variables advanced by constructivists...neoclassical realism is a realist subset of eclectic or multiparadigmatic theories.⁶⁷

In this sense, while neoclassical realism is a distinct perspective, in line with eclectic approaches its emphasis is on explanatory power rather than theoretical parsimony for its own sake.

Approaches to perception cover three issues of particular relevance. First, as Gideon Rose notes, the study of perceptions calls for a detailed process-tracing approach to historical cases: "Analysts wanting to understand any particular case need to do justice to the full complexity of the causal chain linking relative material power and foreign policy outputs."⁶⁸ Second, like recent scholarship on status, this approach is useful for the study of power transition. For example, Aaron Friedberg has observed that while power transition theories assume that states can self-assess their international standing, this is difficult and it is rare for decision-makers to transcend accepted ways of thinking

⁶⁵ Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 8-10, 401. A similar approach to the question is to see it as one of cognitive processes, whereby individuals' differing processing of information explains varying policy recommendations concerning the same objective circumstances: see Deborah Welch Larson, *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 22.

⁶⁶ See respectively: William C. Wohlforth, 'The Perception of Power: Russia in the Pre-1914 Balance,' *World Politics* 39, no. 3 (1987); Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism.'

⁶⁷ Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*.

⁶⁸ Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism,' 164.

in order to recognise changes in relative power. Friedberg notes that the problem is that power transition theories tend to neglect the "intervening mechanisms of perception, analysis and decision."⁶⁹ Third, this project has clear parallels with Rose's argument that policy change results from the gradual diffusion of intellectual developments, rivalry over perceived power, or perceptual 'shocks' making decision-makers aware of long-term power trends.⁷⁰ Of particular interest is Robert Jervis' argument that perceptual shocks require unambiguous information to challenge established theories, making international crises important as catalysts allowing leaders to reassess the basis of policy.⁷¹

Use of case studies

While this thesis deals with the interpretive domain of individual beliefs, it is also a study of the effects and outcomes of these beliefs. In particular, as discussed above, this thesis is trying to identify a causal process by which beliefs about status lead to outcomes. A case study method is necessary because, as John Gerring notes: "Causal arguments depend not only on measuring causal effects. They also presuppose the identification of a causal mechanism."⁷² Case studies are a well-established technique in political science for studying events where multiple, often interdependent, factors have plausible causal value. The identification of a causal mechanism becomes possible through an inductive comparison of commonalities between cases. As Andrew Lamont

⁶⁹ Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton University Press, 1988), 9.

⁷⁰ Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism,' 159.

⁷¹ Robert Jervis, 'Hypotheses on Misperception,' *World Politics* 20, no. 3 (1968): 455-56.

⁷² Gerring, 'What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?,' 348.

points out, “case studies do something large quantitative studies cannot. They can help generate new hypotheses.”⁷³

Within the case studies, the approach used in this project was in line with Jeffrey T. Checkel’s analytically eclectic approach to process tracing. Checkel explains that process tracing is about identifying intervening causal processes between independent variables and their outcomes: “Between the beginning (independent variable[s]) and end (effect of dependent variable), the researcher looks for a series of theoretically predicted intermediate steps.”⁷⁴ Checkel notes that effective process tracing requires some epistemological pluralism, using both positivist and post-positivist methods. This focus on causal mechanisms – mechanisms operating at an analytical level below all-encompassing theories – gives fine-grained explanations.⁷⁵ Indeed, interpretivist approaches may involve reconstruction of historical episodes, where the analysis may use valid causal inference, just as positivists may look at the same episodes but put greater emphasis on assumptions about rationality, causal relationships or parsimonious theories. As King, Keohane and Verba have written, “all good research can be understood – indeed is best understood – to derive from the same underlying logic of inference.”⁷⁶

⁷³ Lamont, *Research Methods in International Relations*, 129. To reiterate briefly, this project uses John Gerring’s definition: “A case study is best defined as an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar’s aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena.” See Gerring, ‘What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?’, 341.

⁷⁴ Jeffrey T. Checkel, *It’s the Process Stupid! Process Tracing in the Study of European and International Politics* (ARENA Centre for European Studies, Working Paper 26, 2005).

⁷⁵ Jeffrey T. Checkel, ‘Process Tracing,’ in *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, ed. Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 114-15.

⁷⁶ Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry : Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4.

Case study selection

This introduction has emphasised that there is now a good deal of scholarship contending that status matters in IR, but this project seeks to find causes to help explain when and why status matters in shaping policy decisions. Because of this, case study selection for the project was about finding historical episodes that would yield a good prospect of revealing the causal power of status. In the terminology of qualitative research methods, this meant finding “most likely cases” – that is, cases where status was already most likely to be a causal factor. If, based on the existing research, we could be reasonably sure that status was in play in the case, it would then be possible to study the chain of events, and from commonalities between cases begin to induce distinct processes by which status works. It should be emphasised that this is not a matter of “selecting on the dependent variable,” because the project is not trying to find whether status played a role in events. The project is about how concerns about status led to changes in prestige-building activity.

The process of case study selection started out from the notion that “most likely” cases would be found among states that see the greatest costs and benefits from changes in their status – that is, major powers, or aspirants to the role of major power. The following literature review chapter goes into more detail about the IR literature on major (or “great”) powers. Suffice to say that, as Thomas Volgy and colleagues explain it, states exert such efforts to gain or maintain major power status because the latter reduces the cost of exercising material power, provides legitimacy for a wider range of foreign activities, and can bolster domestic political support.⁷⁷ Noting that status

⁷⁷ Thomas J Volgy et al., 'Status Considerations in International Politics and the Rise of Regional Powers,' in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C Wohlforth (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 60-61.

attribution concerns general beliefs (as defined above), the aim is to become recognised as a major power, after which observers will have to accept that other members of the group are likely to defer to the major power: “Major power status attribution is indicative of expectations that these very strong and determined actors will exercise leadership on a variety of issues and conflicts central to international politics.”⁷⁸ Moreover, while any major power will be keen to maintain its status, we may see yet more concern about status among rising powers. This is because as a general belief, status is only valuable when it is recognised, and the question of recognition is still very much under contestation for new or rising powers.⁷⁹

A second element in case selection was to hold the time period constant, which let the project study differing cases under similar conditions of international structure. The decade of the 1990s was an attractive time period because the upheavals immediately after the end of the Cold War broke down the long-established bipolar distribution of power and status and threw up the potential for states to significantly change their relative status.⁸⁰ Holding the international structure constant then made it appropriate to select one case study per state, so that the thesis could examine how states faced up to different challenges with varying responses. It was in turn practical for a doctoral project to attempt three country studies. Volgy, et al, are typical in naming the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the USSR/Russia, Germany, China, and Japan as major powers in the post-Second World War era (they use Correlates of War statistics), while Brazil and India stand out as key aspirants toward that status.⁸¹ Out of these,

⁷⁸ Volgy et al., 'Major Power Status in International Politics,' 10.

⁷⁹ Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, 'Managing Rising Powers: The Role of Status Concerns,' in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 41.

⁸⁰ See for example: Kenneth N. Waltz, 'Structural Realism after the Cold War,' *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000).

⁸¹ Volgy et al., 'Major Power Status in International Politics.'; Barry Buzan, *The United States and the Great Powers: World Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).

China, Japan and India were all seen as rising powers during the relevant period, in which each of them showed a wide range of foreign policy changes. They offered an abundant range of historical incidents in which status was already considered a likely causal factor.⁸²

In terms of the specific historical episodes chosen, a key factor was to select cases that were widely considered to be status related, but which also showed variation in policy responses. This was intended to address gaps in the literature about status-seeking that did not lead to armed conflict. The incongruence between the existing literature and the observed behaviour of these states suggested a need for better theory about how states deal with status concerns. For this project, the cases were chosen as follows: for Japan, the bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council showed a state seeking status through international institutional privileges; for China, its decision to join the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was an example of pursuing status through legitimacy; and for India, its Pokhran II nuclear test explosions in 1998 were examples of a state seeking status through material gains. This allowed the cases to highlight a major puzzle in the field: if each of these states were seeking status – including status as major powers – why were their policy decisions so different?

An outcome of the above choice of the three cases was that the subject of this thesis was “the role of status in Asia-Pacific international relations,” and indeed that accurately describes the research conducted. However, the research question was not confined to Asia-Pacific cases, and it is hoped that the findings can be generalised to any region of

⁸² The theme is can be seen in the focus of relevant books on the IR of each country, for example: Reinhard Drifte, *Japan's Quest for a Permanent Security Council Seat : A Matter of Pride or Justice?*, St Antony's Series (Macmillan, 2000); Yong Deng, *China's Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2008); Baldev Raj Nayar and T. V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major Power Status*, Contemporary South Asia (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

the world. The one area where the Asia-Pacific aspect is important is that this project was always concerned about contemporary debates about international power shifts. The choice of three Asia-Pacific cases has advantages in terms of topicality and the project's empirical contribution to knowledge of the international relations of the three countries studied. Thus the Asia-Pacific focus is of practical benefit, but should not narrow the applicability of this project's conceptual findings.

Case analysis methods and methodology

The research of each case study involved process-tracing, focused on elite decision-makers' perceptions of their state's prestige and status and its effects on policy debates. In line with the approach of Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel, this thesis avoids the terminology of 'intervening' variables, and instead focuses on process-tracing as defined as "the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case for the purposes of either developing or testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case."⁸³ Bennett and Checkel also note that despite differing styles of reasoning, process-tracing can be compatible with interpretive analysis. Even though any study of mutually constitutive phenomena, such as international status, leads to the problem of distinguishing events where agents or wider structures are driving the process, a pragmatic approach to interpretivism will still seek out instances where agents contest social structures.⁸⁴ Similarly, Vincent Pouliot points out that while the cause behind any social 'fact' is actors' beliefs that it is real,

⁸³ Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices,' in *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, ed. Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

researchers can take a practical approach provided they are aware that ‘causation’ is really an instance of ‘constitutive analysis’.⁸⁵

The actual work of process tracing involved a review of published material and primary sources such as news reports and speeches, combined with fresh interviews with decision-makers and experts. As the case studies were chosen as ‘most likely’ ones for revealing status in operation, they each presented an abundance of published material which was useful for assembling the detailed steps of process tracing. This was important because the purpose of this thesis was not to reveal basic historical narrative. The intention throughout the project was that the cases presented a good deal of narrative and factual information, which could then be examined through the lens of the research framework outlined here in order to answer the research question of exactly when and how do status concerns effect policy decisions.

Aside from published material, the sources used varied between case studies. The Japan case study used Japanese government reports and contemporary newspaper reports, combined with 11 interviews. The interviewees included all but one of the surviving Japanese ambassadors to the United Nations. The China case study used detailed reports on arms control negotiations published by the Acronym Institute, as well as officially-backed English language sources such as the *Beijing Review*. In China, only five interviews were possible, but these included arms control experts who had worked as negotiators in the events of the case study. The Indian case study used local journalistic accounts of the Pokhran II tests (which have generated a huge amount of literature inside and outside of India), but also gained a great deal from personal memoirs of key protagonists. This was joined with 10 interviews, which included retired high-ranking

⁸⁵ Vincent Pouliot, ‘“Subjectivism”: Toward a Constructivist Methodology,’ *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2007): 213.

officials who were either directly involved in, or were close to and often influential upon, the policy decisions made at the time.

The elite interviews conducted in each case proved to be enormously important. As noted, in each case study it was possible to interview individuals who had been personally involved in the historical decisions concerned. The interviews were conducted with the full understanding that they would inevitably convey the biases and interests of the interviewee.⁸⁶ It was also anticipated that while the interviews were semi-structured, with common question themes across the three cases, interviewees would divert them to “something which sounds like a discussion but is really a quasi-monologue stimulated by understanding comments.”⁸⁷ However, the latter tendency proved to be exactly the strength of using interviews. Because the key interviewees had first-hand knowledge of events, they were able to shift the focus towards themes that were not necessarily obvious from reviewing published material and written accounts. This shift was precisely what allowed the construction of the central argument of the thesis that the onset of a “status crisis” causes states to respond with enhanced prestige-building efforts.

Analysis of the interviews involved weighing different versions of events to gain key plausible explanations. The project searched for “syntheses of understandings that come about by combining different individuals’ detailed reports of a particular event or cultural issue.”⁸⁸ By observing the commonalities and differences between the cases and the policy outcomes, the study inductively arrived at initial theoretical propositions

⁸⁶ William S. Harvey, ‘Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews,’ *Qualitative Research* 11, no. 4 (2011): 434.

⁸⁷ Lewis Anthony Dexter, *Elite and Specialized Interviewing*, Handbooks for Research in Political Behavior (Evanston, Ill.; Northwestern University Press, 1970), 56.

⁸⁸ Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 27.

specifying how and when status is likely to be a factor in foreign policy outcomes.

These initial propositions may be useful in other cases where status is a factor in international relations. To this end, the research question driving the thesis is: “What role did status play in critical post-Cold War foreign policy decisions of Japan, China and India?”

Outline of the thesis

This thesis presents a working model of status, set out in the central argument above, and develops this across six further chapters: setting the project in the context of IR scholarship, outlining concepts necessary to support the central argument, showing how the model was demonstrated in three historical cases, and explaining the findings and their implications in a conclusion.

The central argument of this project was built up from the empirical findings, centring at first on the accounts of interviewees of varying policy settings in order to achieve recognition of valuable status roles. It was clear that the accounts of these policymakers and experts were consistent with the definition above of status as a general belief giving rise to expectations of deference, and it was also clear that they believed that appropriate policies would build a case for achieving status recognition. From there it was possible to define the policy process as “prestige-building” as part of overall aim of “status-seeking”. The three phases became evident when interviewees, in describing the historical events, emphasised the emergence of threats that forced a change in status

perceptions, and that major policy decisions had been the result. This middle “status crisis” phase became central to this thesis as the causal driver of policy change.

The thesis sets out how the central argument was reached and how it manifested itself in historical episodes. The first chapter has started the process, outlining the major puzzles and the aim of the project. It has provided a taste of the big ideas of the thesis, such as prestige and status being “general” or higher-order beliefs, which makes a considerable difference to how states believe they should behave to be recognised for these qualities, as well as how they would measure them. The introduction also set out the research methodology. The latter explained that as a study of both beliefs and policy outcomes, the project uses a theoretically pluralist approach informed by the neoclassical realist research program.

The second chapter situates the project in the context of the existing literature. While this chapter provides an overall literature review, its main aim is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the literature and explain what is and is not relevant to a new project in the field. The literature review finds an extensive role for status in traditional IR research programs including realism, the role of major powers, and hierarchy, and it reviews the recent status “turn” in IR, it concludes that the gaps noted above are still an issue. By proposing one working model for status concerns as a causal factor in policy, this project is addressing just one of these outstanding gaps.

The third chapter is a conceptual framework for the project. This introduction has outlined the central argument of the thesis, but due to the limited range of theory in this field, the argument requires a fresh conceptual explanation in order to succeed. There are three parts to the conceptual framework. First, it develops the definition of prestige

and status that are being discussed in this thesis, including how states measure it and what kinds of pay-offs are expected from gaining it. Second, it proposes ways that states perceive their own status situation. This self-perception is the key vehicle by which this thesis argues that status works as an independent variable or causal factor leading to changes in national policy. Third, it explains the context for states making cost-benefit analyses about prestige-earning activity.

The third, fourth and fifth chapters deal with the empirical case studies, on Japan, China and India respectively. The thesis has aimed for some consistency across the case studies. The first sub-chapters for each case study address in turn the general literature on each state and its national status, and then the existing explanations in the literature for the events of each case study. The second sub-chapters then each have three parts: national policies toward the problem in question; the onset of a “status crisis”; and decisions to resolve the crisis.

In its concluding chapter, this thesis analyses case study findings and assesses their implications for research in IR. It proposes that status is more than a constant national motive, and it is applicable to far more political situations than conflict and war. The policymakers and other practitioners interviewed in this research considered status crises as real events with visible, qualitative impacts. Status was something to be pursued, by means that fitted their countries particular context, goals, and place in international society. Understanding status and its actual impacts on state behaviour is important for a world where the traditional hierarchy is in flux. This project provides a new window into status-seeking as seen by experts in three of the most important powers in Asia-Pacific IR.

2. SITUATING THE THESIS IN THE LITERATURE

Status is a pervasive theme in International Relations, spanning Thucydides to contemporary writers on Asia-Pacific affairs. However, there is no one literature on status – it is both an ancient topic of philosophy, and a new wave of research emerging in just the past decade. It is better to understand that status is such an enduring subject of interest because IR, however materially or socially focused, has always been concerned about international relationships of respect and deference. What changes over time are the ways these things are studied: writers and scholars have turned their interest variously from the desire of individuals for rank; to the perceptions of power; the role of great powers; and the quest for social recognition of one's values, among many other topics.

This thesis proposes that major foreign policy decisions were influenced by considerations of status. This chapter provides definitions, highlights the theoretical context of the thesis and identifies gaps in the existing literature, but more importantly it helps clarify the IR problem we are trying to solve. Even if status has been an enduring theme of interest to IR, its role and function has been perceived very differently by writers and schools of thought. The major contribution of this chapter, therefore, is to identify conceptions of status relevant to the problems of this thesis, and gaps in the literature that this thesis will aim to fill. To foreshadow the conclusion, this thesis finds the driving force of status comes from it being a general belief about an actor's position in a social hierarchy, which sets up expectations about whether that actor will defer to others or be deferred to. This contrasts with understandings of status as inherent to actors' group identity and related self-esteem, but the overlap is such that we have to fully understand the latter as well. As a result, this chapter consists of a broad overview

of the literature, before providing an assessment of the ideas most important to the thesis topic.

This chapter serves three purposes: to define terms, to survey the existing literature on status in IR, and to explain the parts of the literature that will or will not be the focus of the project. The definitions are important for explaining why and how the project uses key terms such as prestige and status. The survey of the literature looks at status as it has appeared across IR: the contribution of canonical writers and classical realists to the foundations of IR; the role of hierarchy in IR, as seen in the roles of major powers and in authority relationships; and the recent “turn” in IR to scholarship specifically on status, which frequently applies social identity theory this field. The final part of the chapter explains that there are parts of the literature that specifically underpin the thesis, while other parts appear less certain – for the most part, this thesis does not reject particular arguments, but it does not see them filling outstanding gaps. Those gaps particularly involve demonstrating a role for status concerns as a cause of policy change, so the chapter then links ahead to a separate conceptual framework and then to the empirical case study chapters.

Definitions

This section makes a functional distinction between relevant terms, but it should be stressed at the outset that many people use the same terms without such distinctions. In everyday usage, political leaders and decision-makers are likely to use many terms interchangeably. However, it is useful to clarify definitions as, even when we look at real-world usage of the terms, we can see they play particular roles in IR. If anything,

the overlap and similarities between the terms might be more important than the distinctions, because they let us bring together different traditions and schools of thinking in IR, under the single heading of “status”.

The central terms of this thesis are prestige and status:

Prestige is a general belief that an actor has positive qualities. Some definitions given in the literature are that it is “public recognition of admired achievements or qualities,”¹ “a belief that one has a reputation for a positive trait,”² or simply “recognition of importance.”³ O’Neill goes into more detail, saying:

A party has prestige with a group for a certain quality if (a) the members generally believe that they generally believe that the party has the quality, (b) they generally believe that they see the quality as desirable, and (c) they generally believe on account of the considerations in (a) and (b) that the party holds power with the group.⁴

O’Neill’s definition is useful because it highlights that prestige is a belief about beliefs, that is to say a higher-order belief. These kinds of beliefs are discussed below. His definition also points out that prestige is generally taken to involve positive qualities – whether normatively so, or simply qualities that others desire.⁵ O’Neill explains his third point, that prestige means the holding of power, in the sense that prestigious qualities are linked to influence or authority.⁶ In addition to the above definitions, as discussed below, prestige is a relative trait. IR traditionally has referred to a “hierarchy

¹ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, ‘Status and World Order,’ 16.

² Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, ‘Reputation and Status,’ 372.

³ Wood, ‘Prestige in World Politics,’ 388.

⁴ O’Neill, *Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige*, 8-9.

⁵ Wolf notes that Morgenthau, for example, identified prestige with power, but most Americans would not have regarded the Nazi regime as prestigious: Wolf, ‘Respect and Disrespect in International Politics,’ 115, note 12. A general belief about a state’s negative qualities might involve infamy or opprobrium giving rise to “pariah” status, but this requires a separate research project.

⁶ O’Neill, *Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige*, 11.

of prestige,”⁷ but recent scholarship on status in IR does not usually place prestige explicitly on a hierarchy.⁸

Status is a collective belief about where a state stands with respect to others and about its identity as a member of valued groups. In the contemporary IR literature, it is defined as “standing or rank in a hierarchy,”⁹ “an attribute of an individual or social role that refers to position vis-a-vis a comparison group,”¹⁰ or “collective beliefs about a given state’s ranking on valued attributes.”¹¹ As the last definition by Larson, Paul and Wohlforth suggests, status is close to prestige: both are general, higher-order beliefs, and are based on valued qualities. As a result, some scholars such as Wood and Renshon use status interchangeably with prestige.¹² However, this thesis emphasises the distinction that status is specifically a belief about where a state stands relative to others, not just a belief about its positive qualities. A belief about status can mean both that a state has a position in a deference hierarchy (its standing), and that a state has an identity as a member of a group that grants a certain standing. Johnston’s definition of status as “an individual’s standing in the hierarchy of a group based on criteria such as prestige, honor, and deference,”¹³ is helpful because it reinforces the idea that prestige is a criterion for being granted status.

The key to both prestige and status is that they are general, or higher-order beliefs. This makes them beliefs about beliefs. To take matters in sequence, zero-order beliefs are the objective situation, while first-order beliefs are what an observer believes about an

⁷ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 32-33.

⁸ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and World Order,' 16.

⁹ Renshon, 'Status Deficits and War,' 513.

¹⁰ Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status,' 374.

¹¹ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and World Order,' 7.

¹² Renshon, 'Status Deficits and War,' 520, note 29; Wood, 'Prestige in World Politics.'

¹³ Alastair Iain Johnston, *Social States : China in International Institutions, 1980-2000* (Princeton University Press, 2008), 82.

actor.¹⁴ One such first-order belief is reputation, which Dafoe, Renshon and Huth define as “beliefs about persistent characteristics or behavioural tendencies of an actor.”¹⁵ Prestige is built up from reputation, but not in the sense that it is an observer’s judgement of the actor in question. Rather, it is the observer’s belief about the reputation that an actor holds within the group as a whole. O’Neill writes that “a party holds prestige in a group for a certain desirable quality if the group’s members generally believe that *they themselves generally believe* that the party possesses that quality.”¹⁶ To illustrate this, O’Neill gives the helpful example of a university: each student may individually believe the university is poor, but if people believe that most other people see the university as good, then it is prestigious.¹⁷ Status is also a general belief. As Renshon points out: “Status is not one actor’s beliefs about one other actor. Rather, status describes many actors’ beliefs about what many other actors also believe.”¹⁸ As will be explained below, this eases the process of status recognition. An actor’s status does not need to be recognised individually by every other actor; rather, each actor need merely be aware that the community generally believes that it (the community) has recognised the actor’s status.

Renshon provides three additional features of status that aid in analysis. First, status is positional: the absolute values of an actor are not so important as its position relative to relevant “reference groups”. Second, status is perceptual, which means it is based on the beliefs of actors. Third, status is social, requiring a shared consensus about a state’s relative position. As Renshon notes, the latter two features imply “the ‘visibility’ or

¹⁴ O’Neill, *Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige*, 1.

¹⁵ Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, ‘Reputation and Status,’ 374.

¹⁶ O’Neill, *Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige*, 1. Emphasis in original.

¹⁷ Ibid. We could also consider the example of the Peninsula Hotel in Hong Kong, which famously ferries its guests in a fleet of green Rolls-Royces. Individual guests may feel that Rolls-Royces are silly cars, but they are happy to ride them because they are aware of a general belief that Rolls-Royces represent prestige. Not only this, but the guests don’t have to worry about whether particular bystanders like Rolls-Royces. The guests know that the bystanders know about the general prestige of the cars.

¹⁸ Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 519.

‘publicity’ hypothesis: the only way to obtain status is through actions that can be seen by others or actions that have visible consequences.”¹⁹ These three attributes of status have further implications. Being positional, this lets us distinguish status from non-positional goods such as honour (defined below), while it also suggests that an analysis of status requires us to first identify the reference groups that matter to an actor. Positionality is also important because one state’s gain in status must be other states’ losses (with the major exception, discussed further below, that membership of status groups can have a certain level of flexibility). The perceptual aspect requires us to further examine the role of beliefs in gauging status. Finally, the social aspect means that because status is accorded on the basis of valued attributes, it is necessary to know what attributes are considered valuable at any time.

A key outcome of both prestige and status being general beliefs is that it becomes easier to reach consensus on where actors stand. Larson, Paul and Wohlforth note that status is a consensus of opinion; indeed they note that status would not exist if it relied on the individual judgements of each observer.²⁰

Attractions of status

Two characteristics make status an attractive prize. One is that high status establishes expectations that states will be deferred to by lower-status actors. The other is that

¹⁹ Ibid., 32.

²⁰ Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, *Status in World Politics*, 8.

status, once recognised, is “sticky” and states can continue to benefit from it even if their underlying values fluctuate.

We saw status defined as an actor’s relative position in the hierarchy of a social group, and in a more detailed definition it refers to “an actor’s standing in a global deference hierarchy arising from power, resolve, and wealth, and consequently what rights, respect, and patterns of deference that actor can expect.”²¹ The meaning of a “deference hierarchy” varies in the literature. Larson, Paul and Wohlforth argue that “status increases the probability of exercising power” (where power is “a relationship of influence that is distinct from the resources that an actor may deploy”), because “people defer to a high-status actor out of respect and esteem.”²² It is true that respect can be more specifically defined as an actor’s demand for “the level of consideration they feel entitled to on the basis of prevailing social norms.”²³ But other scholars refute the notion of voluntary deference. Jonathan Mercer, for example, (using prestige synonymously with status) contends that “prestige rarely generates voluntary deference even among allies,” let alone among adversaries.²⁴ Because of this, respect and esteem alone do not go far enough to explain why an actor should expect deference.

This thesis prefers Renshon’s more specific explanation that “states seek status commensurate with their abilities because it is a valuable resource for coordinating expectations of dominance and deference in strategic interactions.”²⁵ The reference to expectations is important because, as Renshon notes, “status is not one actor’s beliefs about one other actor.”²⁶ It involves beliefs about what many other actors believe. As a

²¹ Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, ‘Reputation and Status,’ 375.

²² Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, ‘Status and World Order.’

²³ Wolf, ‘Respect and Disrespect in International Politics,’ 116.

²⁴ Jonathan Mercer, ‘The Illusion of International Prestige,’ *International Security* 41, no. 4 (2017): 168.

²⁵ Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 515.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 519.

result, status provides a useful heuristic for actors to understand their relations with others.²⁷ Observers may not, in fact, hold a high-status actor in esteem, but they will be aware of the deference that the group generally expects to accord to that actor. The high-status actor in turn can use its status to influence individual observers, because the latter will be mindful of the general deference accorded to the actor. Conflict can however arise when status hierarchies are unclear, such as when there are multiple dimensions on which actors may be ranked, or when an actor challenges existing hierarchies.²⁸

The second major attraction of status is that it is “sticky”. It provides benefits after the original basis for one’s status declines; and it is a fungible attribute: status won in one area can be applied elsewhere.²⁹ A reason for this is that status is to some extent institutionalised prestige: prestigious actors win status recognition that may be worn in the form of markers or titles, and often actual institutional membership. Status is, indeed, frequently institutionalised in the form of membership of formal groupings such as the United Nations Security Council or the Group of Seven. Prestige changes as reputations are incorporated into collective beliefs, which can be both positive and negative. But status, once accorded, is “sticky”: “Once a state obtains a certain status along with the accompanying privileges, it retains a presumptive right to that status which can outlast the initial conditions that gave rise to it.”³⁰ In turn, status becomes a generally held “social fact” about an actor’s social position. Gadi Heimann notes: “Status is based to some degree on possessing a certain characteristic and could be described as the outcome of the institutionalisation of that characteristic.”³¹

²⁷ David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Cornell University Press, 2011).

²⁸ Wohlforth, ‘Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War.’

²⁹ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, ‘Status and World Order,’ 19.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Gadi Heimann, ‘What Does It Take to Be a Great Power? The Story of France Joining the Big Five,’ *Review of International Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 188.

Prestige and reputation

We saw earlier that actors' beliefs about other actors are first-order beliefs. When these beliefs about another actor's qualities are persistent over time, we can say that an actor has acquired a reputation for such qualities. States can have reputations for many things, such as: "military capability, a public that tolerates the costs of war, or loyal generals"; behaviours such as resolve, fulfilling its threats and commitments, risk acceptance, hostility, ruthless retaliation, sensitivity to insults, ambition, or greed; and conversely, cooperative behaviours such as complying with treaties, repaying debt, non-revisionist ambitions, or being a reliable ally.³² (A subsidiary term is "honour", which is defined as public reputation accepted according to compliance with norms set by a social group.³³) It is important, however, that as a first-order belief, an actor's reputation will differ from observer to observer.

Prestige, by contrast with reputation, is a second-order belief, because it is a belief about an actor's reputation.³⁴ One feature distinguishing prestige and status seems to be the degree to which they are in the power of the actor or community. Reputation and prestige are more often regarded as being somewhat in the control of the actor: actors can seize, acquire, and invest in their reputation and prestige. Status, on the other hand, is more often regarded as a function of the community: it is granted or accorded by others.³⁵ Contemporary scholarship tends to define prestige as a quality that can be won, held and lost, but not ranked in a hierarchy like status.³⁶ To be sure, definitions have

³² Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status,' 374.

³³ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and World Order,' 16.

³⁴ Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status,' 372.

³⁵ Ibid., 376.

³⁶ Ibid.; Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and World Order,' 16.

changed over time. As outlined below, realist literature has often referred to a “hierarchy of prestige” in IR, but that was due to differing assumptions that gave the term a meaning more similar to status as it is more commonly used today.³⁷

Discussion

This thesis has provided a distinction between prestige and status for analytical purposes. Scholars not focusing on the same analytical points, and indeed the policymaking vernacular, will tend to elide the differences, as both terms refer to higher-order beliefs about how an actor is generally regarded by a group. This thesis makes the distinction as it is useful to explain the causal role of status in changing policy outcomes.

A practical distinction between prestige and status arises from the many kinds of status that can be accorded by a social group. It is true that frequently states acquire prestige from their overall material and normative qualities, and then move up a general axis in the international hierarchy. However, states may also be seen to acquire prestige related to diverse positive attributes. When there are multiple sources of prestige, states may gain status positions in equally many social hierarchies and groups:

A state can be a ‘great power’, ‘medium-sized power’, or ‘small state’; it can be a ‘developed’, ‘developing’, or ‘under-developed’ state; it can be a ‘sovereign state’, a ‘protectorate’, or a ‘colony’... States may have a top position in some hierarchies but a lower one in others. It is the sum of its various statuses that will determine an actor’s general standing in the community.³⁸

If prestige is a general belief about a state’s positive qualities, and status is a general belief about a state’s position relative to others, then the connection between the two

³⁷ Gilpin, *War and Change*, 186.

³⁸ Heimann, ‘What Does It Take to Be a Great Power?’, 188.

lies in the criteria by which a group values qualities as being worthy of particular positions. Some guidance for this comes from one's beliefs about the nature of international order. If one believes in a predominantly instrumental international order, then the dominant measure of prestige may be material qualities, which in turn may fairly directly rank a state as having high status. However, more solidarist approaches might mean that many aspects of prestige lead to states simultaneously holding status. Therefore, we can gain an idea of whether a decision-maker is likely to be concerned about a distinction between status and prestige. Those who mainly see their national standing moving as part of an international hierarchy with one axis will not make a great distinction between the terms (and are likely to use terms such as the 'hierarchy of prestige' interchangeably with hierarchies of status or standing). Those who see multiple ways in which their state can be accorded status will see a more useful distinction.

In the remainder of this chapter, we will first look at the study of prestige in classical and realist writing, then the role of great powers and international hierarchy, and finally recent scholarship focused on social identity theory.

Canonical and realist perspectives on prestige

This section reviews the place of status in IR's longstanding canonical and realist traditions. It shows that status had a key role in IR's pre-modern foundations, and it was also strongly emphasised by classical realists who shaped the early decades of scholarly IR in the 20th century. These writers mostly discussed status using the terminology of prestige. In some cases, this was due to prestige being important to actors' social

identity; as discussed in a following section, this has interesting parallels to contemporary research on social identity theory. In other cases, prestige was a way of describing perceptions of an actor's material power. As mentioned above, when the standing of states is largely determined by a single criterion (such as possession of material power), then prestige and status become nearly synonymous. This was very much the case for the classical realists.

Prestige in canonical writing

This scene is set in this section first by canonical writers of IR – Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes – before we turn to realism from the early period of scholarly IR onwards. The following part of this section reviews recent scholarship specifically reviving the theme of prestige. The aim is to highlight the aspects of prestige that are currently considered important in research programs on status.

Classical thinkers such as Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes all identified that the causes of war included security, wealth, and some form of prestige (which sometimes included other terms related to beliefs about qualities or social standing, such as reputation and honour). In a study of the “prestige motive,” Daniel Markey recounts some of descriptions employed by these canonical writers: For Thucydides, the causes of war were “security, honour and self-interest;” Machiavelli said the injuries to a state come “in property, in blood, or in honour;” while Hobbes said man is motivated by “competition, diffidence and glory.”³⁹ In Markey's interpretation, the key role of prestige is “as the individual or collective desire for public recognition of eminence as

³⁹ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner, intro. M. I. Finley (London: Penguin, 1972), I.76; Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. and intro. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 219; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (New York: Penguin, 1985), 18; all cited in Markey, ‘Prestige and the Origins of War,’ 135.

an end in itself,” not for the instrumental benefits of, say, positive reputation.⁴⁰ As examples of how prestige worked in canonical writing, according to Thucydides, in the Peloponnesian War, the Corinthians were motivated towards war by resentment of arrogant ex-colonies, and there was no distinction between instrumental and intrinsic motivations; Machiavelli writes that the true aim of a prince is worldly glory, which can be won even in defeat; and for Hobbes, pride is pursued by everybody, not just by princes, and “a strong sovereign is required to quell these glory-hounds.”⁴¹

Much of this writing about the prestige motive demonstrates the way that canonical philosophers saw the drive for power and competition in terms of human nature. Steve Wood refers to this as “recognition of importance,”⁴² while Markey calls it “the individual or collective desire for public recognition of eminence as an end in itself.”⁴³ Steve Wood argues that “prestige demonstrates universality and persistence as a motivation and informal ordering principle in international affairs.”⁴⁴

People seek self-esteem not only through their personal activities, but vicariously through the achievements of social units to which they feel attached, such as sports teams and nations.⁴⁵

Referring back to Rousseau, Markey contends that there are several essential characteristics linking prestige and conflict: prestige is the ultimate relative or positional good; it is scarce; and the desire for it is never truly quenched. Thus it is perpetual, irrational, and it is not always proportional to means-ends calculations. Furthermore, as it is social, the worst violence can take place in a social setting, where there are things

⁴⁰ Ibid., 126-7.

⁴¹ Ibid., 141, 147, 148.

⁴² Wood, ‘Prestige in World Politics,’ 388.

⁴³ Markey, ‘Prestige and the Origins of War,’ 126.

⁴⁴ Wood, ‘Prestige in World Politics,’ 405.

⁴⁵ Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) cited in *ibid.*, 392.

worth fighting over.⁴⁶ Prestige was seen as a motive force behind the behaviour of individuals, statesmen and nations.

The idea of a prestige drive as a perpetual factor in IR has also been revived recently by Richard Ned Lebow. Lebow takes an interesting approach, focusing on an innate human drive for self-esteem that he calls “spirit.”⁴⁷ He argues that states seek status commensurate with their power and accomplishments, but reversing the argument of this thesis, he sees prestige (attractive as an end in itself because it boosts self-esteem) flowing back from status recognition. “On the whole [states] appear at least as interested in the prestige conferred by this status, its related offices and privileges as they are in any material or security benefits.”⁴⁸ However, by describing prestige as a universal human want, Lebow makes it difficult to use the idea as a variable to analyse specific problems. It leaves the question of why “spirit”, rather than any other human characteristic, should be the major driver of IR, and does not explain periods of peace as well as conflict.⁴⁹ Therefore it may be difficult to use notions of prestige as a perpetual factor in research projects that try to identify variables or specific causes. By contrast, as we will see below, social identity theory has attracted greater interest in IR because it is a study of group beliefs, not individual psychology.

Prestige in classical realism

Turning to scholarly IR since the mid-20th century, realists emphasised the role of prestige as an element of international politics. The key distinction between the realists

⁴⁶ Markey, ‘Prestige and the Origins of War,’ 157-61.

⁴⁷ Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 64.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 545.

⁴⁹ A point made in a review of the book: William C. Wohlforth, ‘A Matter of Honor,’ *International Theory* 2, no. 3 (2010): 471.

and the canonical writers was that the former, concerned with the decisive role of power in IR, focused on prestige as an instrumental factor acting as a proxy for power. This made prestige of great significance to realists, because it was a vehicle by which states could communicate or understand perceptions of power. There was another important implication of the realist focus on prestige as a proxy for power: because what matters to states is their power relative to others, it led these scholars to identify a hierarchy of prestige playing a vital role in IR.

Hans Morgenthau believed that politics was about power – with the display of power being just as important as the exercise of it. He said policies about power were about keeping it, expanding it, or displaying it: this equated to foreign policies of the status quo, imperialism, or prestige. He said the purpose of prestige is “to impress other nations with the power one’s own nation actually possesses, or with the power it believes, or wants the other nations to believe, it possesses.”⁵⁰ Also, all power politics was about power estimations, and “it is the primary function of the policy of prestige to influence these evaluations.”⁵¹ Morgenthau noted that the desire for social recognition is a potent dynamic force determining social relations and creating social institutions, while “reputation gives an individual the measure of his due.”⁵² Meanwhile, for Robert Gilpin writing about power transition and hegemonic conflict, prestige rather than power was the everyday currency of international politics:

Prestige is the reputation for power, and military power in particular. Whereas power refers to the economic, military and related capabilities of a state, prestige refers primarily to the perceptions of other states with respect to a state’s capacities and its ability and willingness to use its power.⁵³

⁵⁰ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 93.

⁵¹ Ibid., 95.

⁵² Ibid., 87.

⁵³ Gilpin, *War and Change*, 31.

By the 1980s, there was an extensive body of literature about prestige in international relations, but it could be argued that prestige was narrowly perceived as a device to convey perceptions of power. There was little exploration of the range of identities and interests that states might have that might make them pursue diverse status goals. In particular, there was little in the literature about how states would use prestige in areas that did not involve demonstrations of military power.

We can see here the interesting results of the realists' focus on power in IR. As state power – whether determined by military, economic or moral strengths – was the overwhelming criterion for international standing, we can see this describing very much a “single axis” world hierarchy. Indeed, prestige as used in the mid-century was highly focused on military power, rather than any other factors.⁵⁴ An implication of this is that the classical realist approach to prestige assumes too great a role for coercion. We may be better off if we can find ways of identifying a status hierarchy as a source of legitimate authority.⁵⁵ This opens up a wider range of ways of analysing status in IR, such as exploring how different status goals accord legitimate authority to certain actors in the international system. Another implication of the realist approach is that we should not be confused if realists refer to a “hierarchy of prestige” even if we prefer to define prestige as a non-hierarchical good. Within the assumptions made by the realists, prestige is virtually interchangeable with status as defined in this chapter.

⁵⁴ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and World Order,' 4.

⁵⁵ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, Ch. 1.

Status and hierarchy in IR

There is a growing recognition in IR of the importance of international power hierarchies.⁵⁶ The literature on status in IR engages with that on international hierarchy through the two ways that states are recognised for having status: membership of status groups, and standing with respect to others. The following is an outline of IR's understanding of the status group of major powers, and of the role of legitimate authority stemming from relative standing. We saw earlier that actors are attracted to high status because it sets up expectations of deference, and the following review of these major currents in IR helps explain that attraction.

Major power status

Major powers, or “great powers,” are only one example of a status group,⁵⁷ but the outsize role of these powers means they are of great interest to IR. While changes in states' standing is normally a zero-sum exchange, it is possible for the ranks of major powers to expand, up to a point, without appreciably detracting from the status of the members. David Lake calls this a “club good.”⁵⁸ There are several definitions for this group of states that rank highly in international social hierarchies. Some of the key criteria are that major powers have the opportunity to act as one, thanks to their unusual capabilities; they have the willingness to act, relatively independently of other major powers; and they are attributed “an unusual amount of status by policy makers of other states within the international community.”⁵⁹ Others are that major powers play a major

⁵⁶ Lake, 'Great Power Hierarchies,' 555-56.

⁵⁷ For others, see Clunan's list at p.10 above.

⁵⁸ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 338; Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status,' 375.

⁵⁹ Volgy et al., 'Status Considerations in International Politics,' 62.

role in international security, rank in the top few states, and have a degree of economic self-sufficiency and a massive resource and skill differential compared with lesser powers, making them strong and able to mobilise resources in service of policy objectives.⁶⁰

Major powers are expected to take on special roles within the international system. One of these is to act as part of a “concert of powers.” Along with anarchy and hegemony, a concert of powers is one form of international order that is possible under an instrumentalist (that is to say, realist) framework. Concerts are, however, a less common form of order-building than the other two. In an instrumentalist framework, states are not expected to form a concert of power for its own sake. They are only likely to appear after hegemonic wars, when the conflict has eliminated one or more major powers that would normally play a part in balancing coalitions, and when states are too exhausted to wish to return to warfare. As a result, concerts inevitably decay once the usual assumptions of balance of power politics resume.⁶¹ Major powers therefore only have limited management roles under instrumentalist models of international order.

If we turn from instrumentalist to pluralist (that is, English School) approaches to international order, we find major powers taking on a much more fundamental role. It is one thing to define a “club” of major powers defined by their outsize capabilities and willingness to act. Hedley Bull, however, went further and defined “great powers” as one of the primary institutions of international society, alongside the balance of power, international law, diplomacy and war.⁶² He defined great powers as not only having

⁶⁰ Nayar and Paul, *India in the World Order*, 31.

⁶¹ Robert Jervis, ‘From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation,’ *World Politics* 38, no. 1 (1985): 60.

⁶² Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, Fourth ed. (Columbia University Press, 2002), chapters 5-9.

military and economic strength, but also social recognition as “legitimate great powers.” Superior status is recognised by minor states, so the great powers are “powers recognised by others to have, and conceived by their own leaders and peoples to have, certain special rights and duties.”⁶³ The great powers treat each other with relative equality, while they enjoy the privileges of participating in all major international institutional processes. They are expected to uphold the core norms of international society; even if they do not, in this model, minor powers put up with the hypocrisy of great powers because the stability of the system depends on it.⁶⁴

The English School approach involves more than simply recognising the size or strength of major powers. Bull argued that great powers were so-defined because they took on a major role in ordering and governing international society – and were recognised for doing so. An implication was that this definition would not properly describe a single hegemon; it implies a form of order-building between a number of major powers. As Bull put it, even front-rank military powers such as Nazi Germany, if they were not accepted as having the relevant rights and responsibilities, would not be great powers under this definition. “We imply...that there are two or more powers that are comparable in status; we imply... the existence of a club with a rule of membership.”⁶⁵ Ian Clark explains that “implicit in this argument is that the defining feature of a great power is its (horizontal) relationship with other great powers, not simply its (vertical) relationship with the remainder of international society.”⁶⁶ Great powers took on greater responsibilities than other states, and in return enjoyed special privileges.

⁶³ Ibid., 196.

⁶⁴ Nick Bisley, *Great Powers in the Changing International Order* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012), 10.

⁶⁵ Bull, *Anarchical Society*, 200.

⁶⁶ Ian Clark, ‘Towards an English School Theory of Hegemony,’ *European Journal of International Relations* 15, no. 2 (2009): 205.

In many ways Hedley Bull was approaching the issue of status from the reverse direction of the realists before him. Realists were interested in mechanisms that would help states to perceive and clarify each other's power (the most important variable in IR, as they saw it), and prestige was just such a device. By contrast, the English School was interested in what states did once they had power, and particularly the way the major powers took on the specific roles that let them be recognised as great powers with an institutionalised role in managing international society. In other words, the realists were not concerned about the establishment of a social structure – state to state perceptions of power were all that mattered. The English School looked at relative social positions, which gives us the definition of status that I used earlier in this chapter.

Provision of public goods is a key basis of great power authority and a marker of hegemonic legitimacy. To give a contemporary example: “Washington’s claims to being an ‘Asia-Pacific power’ are hard to refute given its undeniably central position within the East Asian security complex, and its continuing unsurpassed ability to provide security public goods including freedom of navigation, deterrence of adventurism by both allies and enemies, and disaster relief.”⁶⁷ As David Lake outlines, the costs of international governance are substantial: dominant states must provide valuable international order; discipline subordinate states that break the rules of the order; and engage in credible self-restraint – “with great power comes great responsibility.”⁶⁸ In return, the attraction for a state of taking on such a burden is that recognition as a major power reduces the cost of acting as one. “Rather than continuously coercing others into abiding by their will, it is far cheaper and more efficient for dominant states if subordinates comply with rules regarded as rightful and

⁶⁷ Goh, *The Struggle for Order*, 70.

⁶⁸ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 9.

appropriate.”⁶⁹ In addition, major power recognition adds soft power to the state’s material capabilities, creates legitimacy for foreign policy pursuits, and reduces the cost of intervention or building co-operation. The effects of reputation also strengthen the credibility of a state’s threats and commitments.⁷⁰

Legitimacy and authority

Applying relative standing to IR assumes inequalities between states, and at least a nuanced view of international anarchy that allows for hierarchical relations between states. In general, studies of hierarchy in IR concern bargains that are struck between states of varying status. Some of the lines of research include the theory of authority and hierarchy, especially as to what concerns a legitimate bargain in this context; the institutional shape of such bargains in the context of international order; and studies of Asia-Pacific order which emphasise hierarchical traditions in regional IR. Inspired by the period of US unipolarity after the end of the Cold War, by China’s historical role as the centre of Asian order, and by the roles of regional hegemons, this research questions the traditional central place of anarchy in IR. It argues that hierarchies frequently form, with high-status states enjoying legitimate authority.

The first key theme in this literature is that authority is a form of power driven by obligation, rather than force alone. This approach seeks to further erode the distinction between domestic and international politics, seeing no reason why authority-building should stop at the level of the state. As Lake puts it, authority is a form of “rightful rule”, that only exists if one party acknowledges a duty to comply with another.⁷¹ Lake

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Volgy et al., 'Status Considerations in International Politics,' 60-61.

⁷¹ David A. Lake, 'Escape from the State of Nature: Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics,' *International Security* 32, no. 1 (2007): 50.

specifies that authority relationships are not necessarily free of coercion, but they are defined by the status or legitimacy of any force involved. The key is that authority in contemporary IR is not formal or legal, as an empire, but only exists when states willingly subordinate themselves to others for a given return. “Since authority does not exist without recognition of their duty by the ruled, it rests not on assertions of rights by the ruler, but on the conferral of rights by the ruled.”⁷² Lake describes his model as broadly Hobbesian, as “the right to rule rests on a social contract in which the ruler provides a political order of value to the ruled, who in turn grant legitimacy to the ruler.”⁷³ This social contract – “relational authority contract”, as Lake puts it – is essentially an exchange in which dominant states get to set the rules of political order, while subordinate states benefit from reduced uncertainty and transaction costs. Indeed the behaviour of dominant states is shaped by this contract, as “dominant states must produce the promised order, even when it is costly to do so.”⁷⁴ This is a largely materialist approach, in which status is a measure of a state’s role in building and sharing in order.

Lake’s contractual approach is worth comparing with the ways other writers and schools of IR deal with legitimacy. For realists, a legitimate order was one that is accepted by all major powers, and provides durable peace,⁷⁵ or one where the position of the dominant power was supported by values common to participating states.⁷⁶ Taking a liberal institutionalist approach, John Ikenberry and Charles Kupchan concur on the importance of values, saying hegemons gain compliance when “elites in secondary states buy into and internalise norms that are articulated by the hegemon and

⁷² Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 8.

⁷³ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁴ Lake, 'Great Power Hierarchies,' 564.

⁷⁵ Kissinger, *World Restored*, 145.

⁷⁶ Gilpin, *War and Change*, 34.

therefore pursue policies consistent with the hegemon's notion of international order."⁷⁷ However, Ikenberry also emphasises a much more "constitutional" model of order, in which major powers willingly agree to be constrained by institutions, while domestic politics locks in their commitments. Agreement on legitimate order means dominant states offer some kind of restraint. The attraction is that their authority comes with lower enforcement costs, and they can lock in a high status in the international order which endures even if their relative power wanes.⁷⁸ In addition, self-binding becomes a form of power in itself, as it makes power more durable, systematic, and legitimate.⁷⁹ This could be seen as particular explanation for the English School argument that great powers have both special rights and special responsibilities in international society.

Scholarship about authority gives rise to a key debate about the role of status in IR. Do relatively higher status and authority exist separately, or does one always entail the other? For Lake, both status and authority are social constructs, but status is a "club good," and a somewhat malleable social construct, while authority is exclusive and zero-sum.⁸⁰ The two are likely to be correlated, as states with authority are likely to be accorded special status, while high status may boost a state's ability to deliver international order. However, he notes, during the Cold War, high-status states such as Germany and Japan were still subordinate in authority to the United States.⁸¹ He therefore argues that while status carries with it special privileges and responsibilities, authority still requires the separate existence of international hierarchy. As an example,

⁷⁷ G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, 'Socialization and Hegemonic Power,' *International Organization* 44, no. 3 (1990): 283.

⁷⁸ G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory : Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 53-4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁸⁰ David A. Lake, 'Status, Authority and the End of the American Century,' in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C Wohlforth (Oxford University Press, 2014), 247.

⁸¹ Lake explains that, in Waltzian terms, status hierarchies involve variations in the intersubjective distribution of capabilities, while authority hierarchies involve social variations in the ordering principle. *Ibid.*, 252.

he predicts that a rising China could gain status without necessarily threatening the US, because this need not affect American authority over its regional subordinates.⁸²

An opposite view is taken by Anne Clunan, who argues that Lake is wrong because status is necessary for authority to exist.⁸³ The argument is that status needs to be recognised, so states have the legitimacy to enact it. This in fact is an important process, whereby states seek to improve their standing in the hierarchy by seeking social recognition. This also explains why some states appear so insecure, such as China which still believes it needs to project a certain image in order to win social acceptance.⁸⁴ Similarly David Kang contends that authority is a key manifestation of status. He uses the same definition of authority as does Lake, but sees it as a belief arising from political socialisation that explains why one state will defer to another. This intrinsic relationship between the two is the reason why status is so important to stability: if two states agree on status, their relationship will be stable regardless of material differences, and vice-versa.⁸⁵

To conclude this section, it is worth noting that Kang is well known for placing debates about hierarchy squarely in a regional context. He argues that Asian international relations have historically conformed more to a pattern of hierarchy than a pattern of balancing. This is a pattern where the dominant power still functions in anarchy, but other states neither balance against it nor fold under it as in an empire.⁸⁶ Kang bases his analysis of East Asia upon Ikenberry and Kupchan's institutionalism, and the lack of

⁸² Ibid., 264.

⁸³ Anne L. Clunan, 'Why Status Matters in World Politics,' in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C Wohlforth (Oxford University Press, 2014), 275.

⁸⁴ Shogo Suzuki, 'Seeking 'Legitimate' Great Power Status in Post-Cold War International Society: China's and Japan's Participation in Unpkco,' *International Relations* 22, no. 1 (2008): 46.

⁸⁵ Kang, 'International Relations Theory and East Asian History.'

⁸⁶ Kang, 'The Theoretical Roots of Hierarchy in International Relations,' 339, 344.

power-balancing as had been predicted at the end of the Cold War. “East Asian regional relations have historically been hierarchic, more peaceful, and more stable than those in the West,” he notes.⁸⁷ This highlights the central importance of status to understanding the international relations of East Asia, and is a good point on which to turn to recent scholarship on the subject.

Major directions of the contemporary literature

This chapter so far has outlined definitions, especially of prestige and status as higher-order beliefs, put this work in the context of canonical and classical IR’s writing about prestige, and pointed to IR’s strong interest in hierarchy (both the roles of major powers and of authority relationships) as helping to explain roles status play in IR. This has been joined in recent years by a new wave of IR scholarship specifically focused on status itself. This section is about themes in the status “turn” in IR, and aims to highlight the issues of current interest to scholars, as well as some of the strengths and weaknesses in their arguments.

To put the recent wave of status-related literature in context, it marks a revival of a theme that had been in decline in the late 20th century. A research project led by Galtung and others in the 1960s focused on the idea that states that did not receive status recognition might respond with aggression.⁸⁸ A representative view from around that time was that, “the nation whose reputational status is lower than its capability will perceive itself as suffering from a material as well as symbolic deprivation... [and] will

⁸⁷ Kang, ‘Getting Asia Wrong,’ 66.

⁸⁸ See for example: Johan Galtung, ‘A Structural Theory of Aggression,’ *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 2 (1964).

be rather more likely to engage in hostile and aggressive behaviour as a consequence.”⁸⁹

This ran into the problem that blaming conflict on “frustration” assumed too much

irrationality.⁹⁰ In addition, this status research program failed to fit in with IR’s

“paradigm wars” of neorealism, liberal institutionalism and constructivism from the

1980s onwards, so was neglected because it lacked a clear place in the IR discipline.⁹¹

By contrast, in the last decade or so the IR research into status has been revived by new

interdisciplinary work drawing from IR, sociology, social psychology, political theory

and behavioural economics, as well as some returns to IR’s roots. This interdisciplinary

study often examines status in IR from the perspective of social identity theory (SIT),

which looks to explain these issues in IR via sociological and psychological research on

people’s identification with social groups. The following sections outline the emergence

of SIT as a program in IR and look at “socially creative” status-building strategies

suggested by SIT. Two more sections go into some more detail on what recent

scholarship says about winning status recognition and the nexus between status and

inter-state conflict.

Social identity theory

A starting point for the current scholarly interest in status was a 2009 conference paper

by David Kang and William Wohlforth, in which they argued that it was time to start to

operationalise status as an important variable in IR.⁹² This was followed the same year

by a prominent paper by Wohlforth, which has helped prompt a renewed wave of

⁸⁹ Michael D. Wallace, *War and Rank among Nations* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1973), 18.

⁹⁰ Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 515.

⁹¹ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, ‘Status and World Order,’ 4-5.

⁹² William C. Wohlforth and David C. Kang, “Hypotheses on Status Competition” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Toronto, 2009). The paper may be read online, although the authors asked that it not be cited.

publishing on status in IR.⁹³ Wohlforth argues that while conditions of unipolarity reduced material motivations for conflict, rising powers might still be dissatisfied with the status quo because “humans appear to be hardwired for sensitivity to status and that relative standing is a powerful and independent motivator of behavior.”⁹⁴ Wohlforth wished to specifically counter the assumption in power transition and hegemonic war theories that states’ satisfaction with their social position was a function of the material costs and benefits of that status:

The assumption is undermined by cumulative research in disciplines ranging from neuroscience and evolutionary biology to economics, anthropology, sociology, and psychology that human beings are powerfully motivated by the desire for favourable social status comparisons. This research suggests that the preference for status is a basic disposition rather than merely a strategy for achieving other goals.⁹⁵

The key outcome, Wohlforth contends, is that “under certain conditions, the search for status will cause people to behave in ways that directly contradict their material interest in security and/or prosperity.”⁹⁶ This “basic disposition” argument aimed to clearly diverge from IR’s previous instrumental approaches to status and prestige.

To replace instrumental motivations, the theoretical toolkit that scholars have proposed for consideration is SIT, which provides a psychological explanation for competitive interstate behaviour. Drawing on the work of SIT’s founder, Henri Tajfel, Wohlforth argues that “deep-seated human motivations of self-definition and self-esteem induce people to define their identity in relation to their in-group, to compare and contrast that in-group with out-groups, and to want that comparison to reflect favourably on themselves.”⁹⁷ In another study of SIT and IR, Mercer noted the theory’s key

⁹³ Wohlforth, ‘Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War.’

⁹⁴ Ibid., 29.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 34-35.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁹⁷ Wohlforth 2009, 35-36, referring to Henri Tajfel, *Human Group and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Reviews of SIT may be found at: Brown, ‘Social Identity Theory: Past Achievements, Current Problems and Future Challenges.’; Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, ‘The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior,’ in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1986).

breakthrough was that it operates at the level of the group, not the individual. As SIT is not an attempt to sum the beliefs of individuals to give group behaviour, Mercer said he used “SIT because it is a *social* psychological theory of intergroup behaviour... SIT begins with the observation that interpersonal processes and intergroup processes can be different. It puts the ‘social’ into psychology to explain how a group becomes different from the sum of its individual parts.”⁹⁸ Certainly, as Wohlforth notes, it has been challenging to translate SIT’s general claim into specific hypotheses about state behaviour. SIT research “is generally not framed in a way that captures salient features of international relations.”⁹⁹ However, Wohlforth sees “no reason to doubt” SIT’s claim that individual preferences for status will affect intergroup relations. “If those who act on behalf of a state (or those who select them) identify with that state, then they can be expected to derive utility from its status in international society.”¹⁰⁰ This provides a new focus that brings together many areas of social science research. It fits in well with the idea that emotions are important in political science.¹⁰¹

After Wohlforth’s 2009 article, there have been several major books, articles and reviews that have outlined ideas of status in IR, primarily from an SIT perspective. Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko have argued that SIT can help explain why China and Russia are motivated by such a keen sense of grievance over perceived past humiliations at the hands of foreign powers:

Social identity theory posits that people derive part of their identity from membership in various social groups—nation, ethnicity, religion, political party, gender, or occupation. Because membership reflects back on the self, people want their group to have a positive identity.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Emphasis in original. Mercer, ‘Anarchy and Identity,’ 238.

⁹⁹ Wohlforth, ‘Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War,’ 36.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰¹ Jonathan Mercer, ‘Emotional Beliefs,’ *International Organization* 64, no. 1 (2010).

¹⁰² Larson and Shevchenko, ‘Status Seekers,’ 68.

Larson and Shevchenko went on to explain the strategies that SIT suggested states would employ if dissatisfied with their status position, and these are examined below.

Socially creative status strategies

Larson and Shevchenko used SIT to explain three strategies that states would employ to improve their status: social mobility (emulating high-status groups); social competition (trying to surpass the dominant group); or social creativity (in which a state stresses achievements in new domains).¹⁰³ Taking into account Hedley Bull's observation that great power status requires approval from the international community, Larson and Shevchenko noted that social creativity was a particularly useful strategy. It would let states overcome obstacles to their rise without having to overturn the prevailing international hierarchy. Creativity involves developing new international norms, regimes, institutions or development models, and emphasises distinctiveness from established powers – as exemplified by India leading the non-aligned movement.¹⁰⁴ Larson and Shevchenko also argued that Beijing, concerned by the rise of “China threat” perceptions in the 1990s, adopted the “responsible great power” strategy as a form of social creativity. In particular, this strategy was successful because it was endorsed by the United States, as the then dominant power in the system.¹⁰⁵ The two authors thus argued that with appropriate strategies, high-status states need not feel threatened by rising powers.

Status is based on a group's standing on some trait valued by society. Status is a positional good, meaning that one group's status can improve only if another's declines. SIT introduces an important modification to this prevailing zero-sum conception of status by pointing out that groups have multiple traits on which to be evaluated, so that comparisons among them need not be competitive.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Ibid., 66.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 74.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 76-78, 84-85.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 69.

Having said this, scholars have also written about creative status-seeking without basing their approach on SIT. Randall Schweller has studied how states have competed historically through palace-building or railway construction, and currently through everything from technology, culture or environmental stewardship. Like Larson and Shevchenko, Schweller also notes that multiple axes of prestige can allow status-seeking without conflict: “If everyone defines prestige differently, it can be commonly enjoyed; actors can feel ‘good about themselves’ without bringing others down in the process.”¹⁰⁷ But Schweller also considers the counter-argument that multi-axis prestige-building is self-delusion, because states are giving up the types of prestige that really matter. For example, Germany prides itself on its international responsibility, but Schweller says this is only possible because Germany is dependent on US protection, diminishing its autonomy and international clout.¹⁰⁸

Winning status recognition

Considerable current research into status focuses on the process of securing appropriate status recognition. This research frequently proposes that states will engage in various “games” to have their status recognised. For example, Larson, Paul and Wohlforth add that status is made concrete by status markers – visible displays that are perceived as signs of status.¹⁰⁹ They argue that these displays aid in status accommodation, as higher status actors acknowledge the enhanced role of a state via its status markers. Status-

¹⁰⁷ Randall L. Schweller, 'Realism and the Present Great Power System: Growth and Positional Conflict over Scarce Resources,' in *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies after the Cold War*, ed. Ethan B. Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 48.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and World Order,' 10-11.

seeking behaviour is thus about acquiring status symbols, such as space programs, aircraft carriers, or nuclear weapons.¹¹⁰

Emphasising the importance of winning status recognition, Volgy, Corbetta, Grant and Baird provide a similar definition of major powers as noted earlier – states that possess unusual capabilities, are prepared to use them, and seek to independently influence international events.¹¹¹ But these states do not enjoy major power status until there is attribution by other states (community attribution); recognition by other major powers and acceptance into the club (in-group status attribution); and self-reference. Thus major power status came from a combination of capabilities and behaviour, plus the constraint of assuming an independent leadership role in international politics. Major power status indicated expectations of leadership - that such important actors would exercise a range of leadership roles in issues of importance internationally: “The community of states attributing major power status will expect these powers to be involved in international affairs, accept such involvement as legitimate, and may even ask for assistance.”¹¹²

Volgy, et al, provide an additional hypothesis that an important consideration is “status consistency” – a situation where the state’s material capabilities and foreign policy activities have received full status attribution: “Status-consistent major powers... should have the most legitimacy and influence and should behave differently from status-inconsistent major powers or from non-major powers.”¹¹³ If a state is status consistent it should gain extra capacities, such as cooperative efforts (constructing regimes, institutions and organisations), and will find it easier to perform coercive activity

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹¹¹ Volgy et al., 'Major Power Status in International Politics,' 6.

¹¹² Ibid., 10.

¹¹³ Ibid., 10-11.

(implementing sanctions, dealing with militarised disputes, war, and so on). All these actions are more costly for status-inconsistent powers and non-major powers.¹¹⁴ This said, other scholars have questioned whether status consistency is still relevant to contemporary IR. It assumes that status recognition must be consistent with material capabilities (implying the “single-axis” approach to prestige mentioned earlier), yet status recognition is increasingly accorded as a result of non-material considerations.¹¹⁵

Whether or not status consistency is an important consideration, scholars have a strong interest in the “recognition games” played by states to boost their prestige and status. These games are ways that states try to show that they should be recognised by others as having high status, and particularly where the goal is great power status, these games often involve ostentatious investments in status goods. Such conspicuous consumption is either instrumental (where it is also a useful investment), or ‘expressive’ (purely expressing the state’s values): “Some projects—space programs, nuclear weapons, and aircraft carriers, to name a few—are intended as costly signals of great-power status, for they require enormous capabilities and resources that most countries do not possess.”¹¹⁶ Recent research has studied states engaging in these games specifically to demonstrate their legitimate great power status. Shogo Suzuki argues that both China and Japan are ‘frustrated great powers’ because they have not been given the full privileges they believe accords to their status. However, instead of upending the international system (as ‘revisionist’ powers had done in the past), the two states have strived to show that they uphold core international norms, for example through engagement in UN peacekeeping operations.¹¹⁷ These cases are interesting because while China and Japan

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁵ Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, ‘Reputation and Status,’ 383.

¹¹⁶ Pu and Schweller, ‘Status Signalling.’

¹¹⁷ Suzuki, ‘Seeking ‘Legitimate’ Great Power Status.’

are assumed to be dissatisfied, Suzuki highlights ways that they address their status situation within the existing normative framework of international society.

Status recognition and conflict

Scholars contend that if states perceive a gap between what others think and what they “should” think about their status, then there is “status dissonance”. This is a question of “respect”, which Reinhard Wolf proposes “is usually experienced as an unacceptable mismatch between the social position one is assigned by the Other and the position one expects to deserve according to prevailing standards or norms.”¹¹⁸ Such a mismatch is likely when a state has recently gained strength on a particular scale, but its treatment by others is lagging. This appears consistent with earlier work by Robert Gilpin, who argued that status inconsistencies, where a state is not receiving recognition for its advances, are a source of the major ruptures in IR: “If all components were to change in unison, peaceful evolution of the system would take place. It is the differential rate of change... that produces a disjuncture or disequilibrium in the system.”¹¹⁹ For contestation to subside would require a costly arms race or international crisis that forces beliefs about status to come into alignment.

There are a number of ways that scholars propose status dissonance may trigger conflict. One of these is the idea of “status dilemmas”, which involve spirals of tension similar to the security dilemma.¹²⁰ William Wohlforth argues that there is much uncertainty involved in signalling and recognising status claims. The problem is that “if a state wants to know its status, it needs to estimate the collective recognition of such by

¹¹⁸ Wolf, ‘Respect and Disrespect in International Politics,’ 106.

¹¹⁹ Gilpin, *War and Change*, 48-9.

¹²⁰ William C. Wohlforth, ‘Status Dilemmas and Interstate Conflict,’ in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C Wohlforth (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

relevant other states, even as those states face strategic incentives to misrepresent their beliefs.”¹²¹ Conflicts can arise when states are unable to signal their status claims, exacerbating tension even when states only want to maintain their relative standing. This occurs when states are otherwise rational security-seekers, but status is still a key preference.¹²² The danger, Janice Gross Stein argues, is that when states value status as well as security, some may perceive that their status is being challenged when it isn’t. “These leaders then take action to reassert their status, which the other perceives as threatening. And so the spiral begins.”¹²³ One suggestion is that to avoid this situation, dominant states should “stroke the status aspirations of rising powers” on issues of the moment.¹²⁴

Another approach to conflict is taken by Jonathan Renshon, who argues that states will wish to correct status inconsistency in order to gain the ensuing benefits of deference. The risk of conflict arises because states that initiate and win conflicts may expect to boost their status:

Rather than a response to failing to change an actor’s status position, the initiation of conflict is better conceptualized as one way that states seek to alter the beliefs of other members of the international community.¹²⁵

Renshon’s approach is important because he rejects the notion in some of the literature that status and conflict are linked due to emotions which, he argues, assumes too much irrationality on the part of states. Instead, he feels that the literature neglects the possibility of using violence to increase status. Violence might be an effective tool because status beliefs are only irregularly updated, but war reveals hitherto private information. This demonstration of capabilities and behaviours influence others in the

¹²¹ Ibid., 121.

¹²² Ibid., 116-17.

¹²³ Janice Gross Stein, 'Threat Perception in International Relations,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, ed. Leonie Huddy, David O Sears, and Jack S Levy (Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.

¹²⁴ Wohlforth, 'Status Dilemmas and Interstate Conflict,' 140.

¹²⁵ Renshon, 'Status Deficits and War,' 515.

hierarchy to simultaneously re-calibrate their judgements.¹²⁶ This said, while Renshon backs up his hypothesis with a quantitative analysis, his data set involves international conflicts between 1816 and 2005, and measures of status such as diplomatic representation. The question is whether this data is relevant to the present: in the 19th century, states that won wars gained material resources, so were highly likely to get more diplomatic representation. It also leaves the question of whether higher status was a cause or effect of conflict during that period, and whether the motivations for initiating conflict today can be compared to past centuries.

Grounding this project

This project will pick up and run with several major themes in the existing literature, but there are also notions in the literature that will be less relied upon, and these are explained below. However to briefly recap the above, first, on definitions it is worth restating that the major terms in this thesis are status and prestige, which are together important because they are higher-order beliefs about an actor's values. The thesis accepts that the terms are close in meaning, but the distinction is highlighted here in order to better set out the central argument of the project. Second, this chapter has set out canonical and classical accounts of prestige, which both provide context and give useful accounts of status-seeking in the framework of a single axis of prestige. Third, IR's work on hierarchy (both major powers and authority relationships), explains the attractiveness of status and how it contributes to establishing patterns of expectations around deference.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 525-26.

Turning to contemporary scholarship on status, this thesis takes the position that it is not necessary to adopt the underpinnings of SIT in order to make use of its predictions regarding status-seeking strategies. The motivations for status-seeking generally given in SIT-related work need more validation to apply to IR. For example, SIT bases status-seeking on in-group versus out-group rivalry: Wohlforth argues that there is “no reason to doubt” SIT’s claim that individual preferences for status will affect intergroup relations, and “if those who act on behalf of a state (or those who select them) identify with that state, then they can be expected to derive utility from its status in international society.”¹²⁷ Similarly, Larson, Paul and Wohlforth note that “higher social group status enhances collective self-esteem, derived from pride in one’s membership and social identity.”¹²⁸ However, more evidence should be provided as to why studies of individuals’ attachment to social groups can be equated to the behaviour of states in international politics.¹²⁹ For these reasons, the thesis has not relied on these explanations as the basic motivation for status-seeking. The thesis does not rule them out, but it is important not to get caught up in futile arguments about whether status-seeking is an intrinsic or instrumental behaviour. The pursuit of any valued ends is likely to show both motivations.¹³⁰

Compared with the motivations presented by SIT, this thesis is much more convinced that it is possible to study status as a good pursued in IR for its strategic benefits. These benefits primarily involve establishing expectations of deference, as O’Neill sets out,¹³¹ but status is specifically pursued because it involves the institutionalisation of prestige,

¹²⁷ Wohlforth, ‘Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War,’ 37.

¹²⁸ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, ‘Status and World Order,’ 18.

¹²⁹ As noted earlier, a point made by Wohlforth. See note 13.

¹³⁰ On this matter, I broadly agree with Renshon: Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 521-22. Dafoe, Renshon and Huth also note that instances where states appear to pursue status over material goods might simply be cases of intertemporal trade-offs – short-term costs for long-term ends. Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, ‘Reputation and Status,’ 382-83.

¹³¹ O’Neill, *Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige*, 2.

making it durable and fungible. The most privileged status groups, such as great powers, may be accorded a host of special rights (as well as responsibilities). As Heimann writes, status provides not just self-esteem but practical advantages -- “influence, economic advantage, and even security.”¹³² With this said, there is much that can be used from IR’s engagement with SIT: the whole range of socially creative strategies set out by Larson and Shevchenko are highly useful in this thesis. This is understandable when we consider that even when states have strategic motivations to seek status, they are aware that they are building sets of social expectations to their benefit, so social strategies are the logical way to attain them.

The major gap in the literature remains demonstrating how and when status concerns play a causal role in IR. Much classical work assumes too often that prestige and status-seeking is a perpetual background constant, while broad IR agendas on hierarchy describe the roles and interactions of mostly high-status actors, without explaining specifics about when status concerns might change behaviour. Recent work involving SIT provides useful accounts of status-seeking strategies, but does not explain the circumstances when status dissatisfaction, for example, plays a causal role in policy decisions. Even work such as Renshon’s that focuses on strategic motivations for status-seeking still uses historical data that focuses on status concerns leading to war. Contemporary IR needs to consider a much broader range of outcomes arising from status concerns.

As a result of the above, the thesis proceeds with the following steps. First, a short chapter fleshes out concepts in order to fill the gap between existing status literature and the findings of the empirical case studies. These concepts, including prestige-building

¹³² Heimann, ‘What Does It Take to Be a Great Power?’, 188-89.

behaviour, perceptions of prestige and status, and cost-benefit analyses in the context of status-seeking, are not themselves intended to be innovative, but they place building blocks under the pattern of activity that was observed in the case studies. The thesis then follows with the three country case studies. Each was selected as a case that was “most likely” to show status in practice, and in each case there is a pattern of activity that involves status concerns. The analysis of these cases aims to fill one gap in the literature by showing specific situations where status concerns had a causal role in policy decisions.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Purpose

In the chapters that follow we will explore the empirical evidence that supports the central argument of this thesis. This argument is that states value certain status roles and will accumulate prestige in a gradual fashion in order to secure these roles, but crises may arise that force a change in these valuations, leading states to enhance their prestige-building activity. The existing literature has touched on many aspects of status, but leaves gaps in terms of explaining this sequence of events. In particular, the literature does not work in detail to distinguish prestige and status, there are gaps in the prevailing social identity theory, especially in terms of causal connections, and there is still a lack of explanation of variability in the role of status.

The theoretical framework for this study is broadly a neoclassical realist one. It is agent-focused while allowing for structural effects to shape the foreign policies of states. It assumes rational decision making as a starting point, but builds on the neoclassical realist literature that emphasises biases and other perceptual limits to achieving ideal cost-benefit analyses.¹ Rose described foreign policy under neoclassical realism as primarily driven by effects of the external environment, translated through “unit-level intervening variables such as decision-makers’ perceptions and state structure,”² while

¹ Notable references in this literature include: Rose, ‘Neoclassical Realism.’; Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, ‘Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In,’ *International Security* 25, no. 4 (2001); Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton University Press, 2006); Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*; Nicholas Kitchen, ‘Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: A Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation,’ *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 1 (2010); Adam Quinn, ‘Kenneth Waltz, Adam Smith and the Limits of Science: Hard Choices for Neoclassical Realism,’ *International Politics* 50, no. 2 (2013); Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*.

² Rose, ‘Neoclassical Realism,’ 152.

Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman emphasise that “neoclassical realism identifies elite calculations and perceptions of relative power and domestic constraints as intervening variables between international pressures and states’ foreign policies.”³ Broadly speaking, this project sits in a neoclassical realist approach to structural factors (such as relative international status) being translated in a causal sense through the perceptions and rationality biases of individuals and groups of decision makers.

This chapter clarifies a number of concepts that will be used to frame the empirical analysis in the chapters that follow. It outlines concepts to support each of the three phases of status-seeking activity observed in the cases: clarifying the role of prestige, by explaining that states have a variety of status roles and they seek recognition for this status by building up prestige for differing positive qualities (referred to here as “multiple axes” of prestige); explaining that in situations such as a status crisis, actors are capable of judging their own and others’ status because prestige and status are general beliefs held by a group rather than individuals (actors are also aware that general beliefs need to be contentious and clearly communicated to change the views of a group); and explaining how valuations of status-seeking strategies may change, looking to the “Rubicon theory” of war as one way that crises force a change in mind-sets, and also looking at the role of crises themselves in changing perceptions.

³ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, and Norrin M. Ripsman, 'Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy,' in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 28.

Prestige in this thesis

Prestige is important in this thesis because the building of it is a key variable in the central argument. The argument is that states accumulate prestige in order to support their status goals, and in particular circumstances (after a status crisis) will work harder to secure their status by enhancing their prestige-building efforts. This requires clear definitions: as we have seen, status is an actor's position in a social hierarchy, while prestige is the general belief that a party holds a positive quality. The *general* quality of this belief should be borne in mind as critical: prestige becomes analytically useful when we recall that individual observers do not have to believe the party has a good reputation; they only have to consider that the social group (in this case, the relevant community of states) generally thinks that the group itself thinks so.

This project uses prestige and status to describe the means and ends seen in the cases, where prestige was the currency and status the pay-off. This conforms to many of the concepts seen in the literature: as Dafoe, Renshon and Huth point out, status is a function of community attribution and is granted or accorded by others.⁴ Prestige can be gained or lost; it is built up from their actions and interactions over time: "Actors can seize, acquire, and invest in their reputation and prestige."⁵ The argument of this thesis is very much about states aspiring to status roles and amassing a balance of prestige with which to win them.

Prestige is conceived of here as a means that states employ to achieve their status ends. As such, this thesis does not use prestige in the sense proposed by some scholars who

⁴ Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status,' 376.

⁵ Ibid.

outline a “prestige motive” that is perpetual, irrational or non-proportional.⁶ To the contrary, this project sees prestige-building as meeting cost-benefit and risk calculations, which can be subject to variation as proposed in the central argument. This section outlines the kinds of status goals for which states employ prestige-building, and gives examples of this activity. This section and the next section also address criticisms of prestige that appear in the literature surveyed in the previous chapter.

Describing prestige

There will be as many kinds of prestige as there are status roles, so states with differing status ambitions might be equally keen to acquire prestige, but will engage in differing activities to do so. As noted in the previous chapter, Heimann points out that various status hierarchies can exist in parallel; states may be high in some hierarchies and low in others, and the sum of their statuses will determine their overall standing in the international community.⁷ The political purposes of states, we saw earlier, will determine which status groups they will seek to join – with examples ranging from major power or advanced economy to normative exemplar or leader of the developing world. As Anne Clunan notes, these may be determined by material characteristics such as wealth or power, or “by political and economic governance, cultural affinity, or tradition.”⁸ In addition, Michelle Murray points out that anarchy contains a “potentially infinite” range of social structures in which states could choose to pursue their aspirations. “Just as with individuals, every state has multiple identities that only

⁶ Markey, ‘Prestige and the Origins of War,’ 157-61.

⁷ Heimann, ‘What Does It Take to Be a Great Power?,’ 188.

⁸ Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence*, 31.

become salient in certain contexts, so at any given time a single state may be engaged in multiple struggles for recognition.”⁹

Taking a parallel, or multi-axis, approach to status is more useful in this project than the motivations for status competition generally found in SIT. Mercer has observed that SIT was originally developed as an explanation for conflict where it occurred for non-material reasons. He has noted SIT’s division of test subjects into in-groups and out-groups, that are seen to generate intergroup competition.¹⁰ SIT’s origins in social psychology appear too restrictive for it to explain the patterns of activity in this project. It may well be that individuals relate to in-groups and out-groups in conflictual ways. But states have a vastly greater choice of groups or roles with which to be associated, and this should reduce the need to link prestige-building and conflict.

To further explore the implications of this concept, “multi-axis” prestige-building reduces the likelihood that prestige gains for one necessarily come at a relative cost to others. The latter is implied in meanings of prestige typically found in classical and canonical literature and in traditional diplomatic practice. A single axis makes status a positional good, which means that “high status is thus inherently scarce, and competitions for status tend to be zero sum.”¹¹ Gains in status can only come at costs to others, which means status-seeking can be inherently conflictual. Multiple hierarchies of status allow for multiple axes of prestige-building: a range of socially creative strategies become possible, and actors can pursue status without necessarily impinging

⁹ Michelle Murray, ‘Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics: The Tragedy of German Naval Ambition before the First World War,’ *Security Studies* 19, no. 4 (2010): 665.

¹⁰ Mercer, ‘Anarchy and Identity,’ 237, 241.

¹¹ Wohlforth, ‘Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War,’ 30.

on each other's interests. It is possible to study the effect of status concerns in many areas separate from international conflict.¹²

A second implication of the multi-axis approach is that prestige-building will frequently involve trade-offs between different values. It will typically be difficult for a state to devote too much effort to one avenue of status-seeking because the costs and risks will be too high. An excessive effort on one front will undermine interests elsewhere. This process becomes more visible after separating the concepts of prestige and status, as the distinction between means and ends allows us to envisage a pattern where states engage in prestige accumulation in order to achieve status goals. The case studies in this project look at situations where the normal balance in status-seeking has been upset by status crises. These crises can have the effect of tilting the balance of effort toward one axis of prestige-building, which requires a particular trade-off, and results in more assertive foreign policies.

Examples of prestige-building

The case studies of this project each show examples of states pursuing multiple status ambitions. In each of the three cases, the states in question advanced prestige-building policies on separate, simultaneous tracks. India had since independence taken on such diverse status roles as normative exemplar, leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, regional hegemon, and prospective great power; China pursued the status of great power and leader of the developing world; and Japan sought both "dignity" as an equal sovereign state, and recognition of its material achievements. The trade-offs between these prestige-building programs aimed at producing different statuses help explain

¹² Larson and Shevchenko, 'Managing Rising Powers,' 25.

many policy outcomes. However, it is worth stepping back and looking at other examples of how states pursue prestige – whether they are large, medium or small powers.

A distinctive example of major power-status seeking is given by Larson and Shevchenko, who point to Brazil's efforts from around 2003 to win recognition as a great power and build its candidacy for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Their study describes several strategies by Brazil's President da Silva: joining a greater range of international institutions and diplomatic "clubs"; setting up the IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) Forum of large, multicultural, developing democracies; and having Brazil take a greater responsibility for UN peacekeeping and stabilisation missions. At the same time, Brazil maintained an identity as a developing country, and continued to develop its credentials on behalf of developing countries in WTO negotiations, on climate change and as a "norm entrepreneur."¹³

Prestige-building in the pursuit of status recognition is not limited to great power candidates, as David Kang points out in a study of South Korea. From the mid-1990s, Seoul built its middle power credentials upon its economic success, accession to the OECD, and successful consolidation of its democracy. South Korea then worked from 2009 to actively promote a national image through public diplomacy and campaigns by multiple government agencies, often emphasising Korean pop culture. Kang notes that this "headlong rush for status" has the problem that South Korea itself does not seem clear about what it stands for and how it hopes to get it. In particular, he notes that "the relationship is not at all clear between popular culture and the deeper views that others hold of a nation, or that popular culture can reflect deeper values and goals of a society

¹³ Ibid., 49-51.

in a meaningful manner.”¹⁴ The implication is that a public branding exercise may not be sufficient to build prestige, unless connected to specific foreign policy goals and values.

At another level of national scale, a useful volume by Iver Neumann and Benjamin de Carvalho explores the neglected topic of small-power status-seeking. Focusing on the case of Norway, Neumann and de Carvalho note that the study of status is too much concentrated on competition and conflict between the great powers. Yet compared with them, small states may be even more concerned about status, because the latter do not have the option of playing in the domain of power politics. Small powers such as Norway therefore try to be noticed by taking their own (relatively) small responsibility for international peace and security. “Small states achieve status through making themselves *useful* to greater powers,” Neumann and de Carvalho note.¹⁵ The prestige-building activities of small and even middle powers by definition requires a wider understanding of the possibilities of status roles than is allowed for by the status literature’s focus on international conflict.

Criticism of prestige

While this thesis makes a specific use of prestige, we have seen that it (prestige) is an old concept in IR and foreign policy practice, and its underlying validity has been criticised. This criticism is well summarised in Mercer’s comment that “prestige is an illusion. It has neither strategic nor intrinsic value.”¹⁶ Mercer argues that states base their own perceptions of prestige upon actions that give them pride, but this gains them

¹⁴ David C. Kang, ‘Status and Leadership on the Korean Peninsula,’ *Orbis* 54, no. 4 (2010): 550-51.

¹⁵ Iver B. Neumann and Benjamin de Carvalho, *Small States and Status Seeking : Norway's Quest for International Standing*, New International Relations (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 2.

¹⁶ Mercer, ‘The Illusion of International Prestige,’ 135.

no real power, while their peers belittle them and refute their prestigiousness. Mercer puts the following questions to anyone seeking to build IR theories of prestige: “One should be sceptical of prestige arguments that do not explain or document how actors evaluate their prestige, how observers assess an actor’s prestige, or why one should expect an adversary’s voluntary deference.”¹⁷ The questions of evaluation and assessment are addressed in the next part of this chapter, while the following addresses the question of deference.

The way to clarify the role of deference as a product of prestige is to recall that prestige is a general belief. An actor has prestige when the members of the relevant social group generally believe that the other members believe the actor has positive qualities.¹⁸ When a state faces an adversary, neither party need believe the other has a high reputation, but they judge each other’s prestige based on what they believe the wider community generally believes about them. This is reflected in the way most literature refers to the topic: status is “a valuable resource for coordinating expectations of dominance and deference”; or “status informs patterns of deference and expectations of behaviour.”¹⁹ Prestige builds status which in turn is a way of informing actors about the deference relationships that may be expected. There is no need for an adversary to accept that relationship, only for the adversary to be aware that most members of the community take it into account. With this said, it is also necessary that actors can perceive prestige, and this is a topic of the next part of this chapter.

¹⁷ Ibid., 168.

¹⁸ O'Neill, *Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige*; Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, ‘Reputation and Status,’ 364. See also: Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 518-19; Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, ‘Status and World Order,’ 8; Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, ‘Reputation and Status,’ 364.

¹⁹ Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 515; Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, ‘Reputation and Status,’ 374-75.

Self-perceptions of prestige and status

Even if we have working concepts of prestige and status, we then must know how states are able to perceive and measure their own prestige and status. This is important because the variable at the centre of the project is the change in states' perception of their status that comes about as part of a status crisis. This invites Mercer's question about how states observe or assess their own prestige and that of others, because status recognition will be accorded on the basis of prestige. As Jervis comments, "it is hard to know what a person's perceptions were and even harder to know whether they were correct."²⁰ This section explains that while prestige and status can sometimes be related directly to material assets, the overriding issue is that they are general beliefs. This means they can only be assessed – indeed they only matter – as a result of negotiation and diplomatic practice. A key way in which this practice works is through states adopting status roles.

Status roles

This project uses the concept of status roles to help explain how status is assessed by actors and observers. Status roles provide a useful connection between accumulated prestige and recognition of status, because they allow a shorthand understanding for an actor's position on a social hierarchy. This in turn is important because status only delivers its benefits – rights, recognition and the expectation of deference – when it is recognised by others. Recognition requires a consensus, yet could be difficult when actors can build prestige along many different axes and may sit high in some status hierarchies and lower in others.²¹ In IR, an easily understood status role, such as "great

²⁰ Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 7.

²¹ See pp.78-80 above.

power”, “developed country”, or “sovereign state” clearly signals the social hierarchy in which a state sits. This matters, because as explained below, prestige and status are general beliefs that only arise because of publicly visible qualities. Status is only possible because audiences can reach consensus on general beliefs, and by taking on a known role, an actor helps its audience to simplify and speed this process.

The concept of a status role is a shorthand that is most relevant to the creation of general beliefs among audiences – that is, audiences’ ability to agree that qualities are prestigious and warranting status. Roles may entail varying levels of status, and involve varying costs to acquire, with the choice of objective determined the political purposes of states.²² Acquiring roles may however lead to changes in strategy, as the implied or explicit demands of audiences cause states to learn or be socialised into their roles.²³

Status roles should not be confused with status markers, which are acquisitions contributing to an actor being recognised for a status role. For example, China in 2008 displayed the status marker of hosting the Olympic Games,²⁴ but this was merely a means to the end of the desired status role of rising great power (evidenced by being able not only to afford the Games, but to capably host them). In addition, the key risk attached to status roles is the fact that their shorthand nature is an asset and a vulnerability. If a status role is threatened, an actor could at once lose status recognition from an entire audience. Because of this, this project looks closely at the behaviour of states when they perceive threats to valued status roles.

²² See p.78, and discussion of national role conceptions at p.263.

²³ See: Sebastian Harnisch, 'Role Theory: Operationalization of Key Concepts,' in *Role Theory in International Relations: Approaches and Analyses*, ed. Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank, and Hanns Maull (Routledge, 2011), 10-12; Stephen G Walker, 'National Role Conceptions and Systemic Outcomes,' in *Psychological Models in International Politics*, ed. Lawrence S. Falkowski (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), 173. See also p.271 below for discussion of how status roles may constrain a state.

²⁴ See for example: Pu and Schweller, 'Status Signalling,' 143.

Social and perceptual considerations

Some scholars do approach the question of prestige and status by measuring underlying material qualities. Some see prestige as “an epiphenomenon of material power” and therefore measured on material grounds,²⁵ while others see it as measurable quantitatively, for example by the density of a state’s diplomatic connections.²⁶ This may be adequate when the discussion is of a single axis of status, typically great power status, which flows readily from material measures of prestige. But this thesis contends that states have many status roles and prestige is pursued through numerous axes. As a result Wohlforth comments that while some cases of prestige-building may be easy to identify, others are difficult to measure, and then the question becomes how do actors agree on what to measure?²⁷ As the following argument sets out, the key to this lies in conceptualising the nature of prestige as a general or higher-order belief.

When the belief in question is a higher-order one, actors are making judgements about commonly held beliefs or “social facts”. This means judgements are about ideas that have been heard, debated or even fought over by the group, just as much or even more so than they are about underlying material facts. The key to assessing status is therefore to consider that it is made up of a combination of negotiation over according it, and then perceptions that it has been accorded. As Renshon notes:

[That status] is both perceptual (based on beliefs) and social (in that it requires some shared consensus about relative position) aids in empirical investigation since these qualities imply what is termed the “visibility” or “publicity” hypothesis: the only way to obtain status is through actions that can be seen by others or actions that have visible consequences.²⁸

²⁵ Wood, ‘Prestige in World Politics,’ 388; Wohlforth, ‘Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War.’

²⁶ Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, *Status in World Politics*, 10-11.

²⁷ Wohlforth, ‘Status Dilemmas and Interstate Conflict,’ 121.

²⁸ Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 520.

These points highlight that the underlying positive qualities that contribute to prestige become only part of the status equation. Assessments of prestige instead are made up of an observation that there has been a process of negotiation, combined with consideration of how well the acquisition of prestige has been communicated to the group.

Negotiation of prestige

When it is understood that prestige and status are both general, higher-order beliefs, the process of measuring them also becomes a matter of beliefs. This is true even in situations when prestige predominantly comes from quantifiable, material assets, because even then we are assuming a general belief that these assets matter. As we move to contexts where many status roles are in play, assessing them comes down to two main factors: how much states care about them, and negotiation over what counts.

States' strong beliefs about certain measures of prestige and status make a difference, because they contribute to the process of contestation that actually makes prestige and status relevant. As Dafoe, Renshon and Huth remark, across the status literature the one thing that scholars agree upon is that "leaders, policy elites, and national populations are often concerned, even obsessed, with their status and reputation... In fact, the importance of reputation and status is so self-evident to leaders that threats against those interests are often used to compel and deter other states."²⁹ Even Mercer, arguing that prestige is illusory, accepts that "evidence that states seek international prestige is overwhelming."³⁰ This sensitivity is important because it highlights the way that status and prestige are established, like most concepts of hierarchy in IR, by contestation and

²⁹ Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and Status,' 381.

³⁰ Mercer, 'The Illusion of International Prestige,' 133.

negotiation. Vincent Pouliot provides a valuable account of how political negotiation, social context and practice in fact give meaning to status. He argues that in the absence of a “symbolic hegemon”, rules of status attribution are inherently ambiguous and disputed, so “what counts as a valuable asset, sometimes even worthy of special status, is defined, contested, and implemented in and through diplomatic debate and practice.”³¹ Returning to the above point, the fact that such rules exist is indicated by the fact that states care about them. As a result, we should not look to theories to deductively establish when and how prestige and status matter, but instead we should be guided inductively by the words and actions of decision-makers themselves.

Numerous case studies highlight states’ own signals as part of this process of negotiation. For example, Joshua Freedman notes that it is hard to work out where China stands on any international status hierarchy, and even harder to use that limited information to predict that China will suffer status insecurity. Instead, it is necessary to try to track China’s own beliefs about its status via its statements and its acquisition of status symbols and emulation of high-status society.³² Another example can be seen in Norichika Kanie’s argument that Japan is a status underachiever and is prepared to take greater risks and pay higher costs to augment its status. Kanie uses as evidence Japan’s self-perceived status referred to in its Diplomatic Yearbook, and many references to leadership and initiative in official documents.³³ Interesting cases in the literature look back to the Congress of Vienna: status-signalling there included Russian and French

³¹ Vincent Pouliot, 'Setting Status in Stone: The Negotiation of International Institutional Privileges ' in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 194-95.

³² Freedman, 'Status Insecurity and Temporality in World Politics,' 808.

³³ Norichika Kanie, 'Japan as an Underachiever: Major Power Status in Climate Change Politics,' in *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics: Global and Regional Perspectives*, ed. Thomas J Volgy, et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 116-20.

declarations of their claims to great-power status, after initially being excluded from negotiations around the Congress.³⁴

States strive to establish their prestige and status as general beliefs. Relatively easy ways to identify this can be seen in practices such as conspicuous consumption, and institutionalisation of status. Conspicuous consumption involves costly expenditure on prestige projects in both civil and military areas.³⁵ It is a way of communicating a state's possession of substantial material assets, because some programs "require enormous capabilities and resources that most countries do not possess."³⁶ For example, many states appear to believe the expense of hosting the Olympic Games is prestigious;³⁷ certainly the denial of hosting the games, as was suffered by China in regards to the 2000 Games, may be taken as a blow to prestige.³⁸ Other examples have included the possession of colonies, a space program, a national airline or nuclear weapons.³⁹ In a contemporary context, scholars note China's expenditure on a manned space program and an aircraft carrier construction drive.⁴⁰ The latter examples are notable because observers can readily see that China is spending more on these programs than would be expected for their material benefits alone.⁴¹

If conspicuous consumption promotes material bases of prestige, normative prestige is often reinforced through the granting of privileges in international institutions. Heimann

³⁴ Iver B. Neumann, 'Status Is Cultural,' in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 88; Benjamin Zala, 'Great Power Management and Ambiguous Order in Nineteenth-Century International Society,' *Review of International Studies* 43, no. 2 (2016): 375.

³⁵ This is also the topic of a forthcoming book by Lilach Gilady, *The Price of Prestige: Conspicuous consumption in international relations*, Chicago University Press 2018.

³⁶ Pu and Schweller, 'Status Signalling,' 145.

³⁷ Wood, 'Prestige in World Politics,' 405.

³⁸ Yong Deng, 'Hegemon on the Offensive: Chinese Perspectives on U.S. Global Strategy,' *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 3 (2001): 354.

³⁹ Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*, 322.

⁴⁰ Fiona Cunningham, 'The Stellar Status Symbol: True Motives for China's Manned Space Program,' *China Security* 5, no. 3 (2009); Pu and Schweller, 'Status Signalling.'

⁴¹ Pu and Schweller, 'Status Signalling,' 151.

notes that measures of prestige include the privileges awarded to high-prestige states in collective security institutions (such as receiving a permanent UN Security Council seat), gaining the right to form a sphere of influence, and receiving a place in the informal, exclusive forums that make up a concert of powers.⁴² These all contribute to the “sticky” nature of status, and Larson, Paul and Wohlforth refer in this context to the process of “concretising” status.⁴³ This explains how status can endure even as its material or normative underpinnings change as, for example, in the cases of Britain and France, which guarded high status roles even in diminished postwar material circumstances.⁴⁴

Evaluating prestige

Even accepting that the value of prestige arises from negotiation, it might still be argued that it is difficult for any consensus to arise on what status should be accorded to it. This provides an important insight into understanding why certain activities will be prestigious. The actor’s activities or assets do not need to be inherently valuable, nor convince every observer that they are valuable. Actors only need to believe that the social group in general will be convinced of their value. This compares with reputations, where every actor has an individual and private judgement of each other actor. Prestigiousness does not require knowing other actors’ private judgements; it only requires knowing the general belief, which by definition can only be the belief that is openly discussed and communicated throughout the group. This means that establishing

⁴² Heimann, ‘What Does It Take to Be a Great Power?’, 190.

⁴³ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, ‘Status and World Order,’ 10-11.

⁴⁴ See: Benjamin Zala, ‘Polarity Analysis and Collective Perceptions of Power: The Need for a New Approach,’ *Journal of Global Security Studies* 2, no. 1 (2017): 7-9.

prestige and status is not a matter of changing individual judgements, but of promoting a general belief.

In addition to the higher-order belief aspects of prestige and status noted above, this project is specifically focused on *change* in perceptions of status. States certainly appear to be able to quickly recognise when their relative status changes. As Renshon notes: “While preferences for higher status can be taken as a constant, the level of concern over relative status is not and thus provides far greater analytical leverage in examining the effects of status in world politics.”⁴⁵ Scholarship in this field shows very interesting results in terms of how test participants agree on measurement. Compared with private judgements, it is remarkably easy for groups to reach a consensus on what they believe a general belief to be.⁴⁶ This in turn helps us to explain how states can so readily detect changes in their status position.

Communicating prestige

The result of prestige and status’ general nature is that assessing them often does not concern their underlying merits as much as how well they are communicated. An inspiration for this comes from studies of the earliest examples of prestige goods in human societies. One study notes that humans are unique in that social standing is not based solely on violence or threats; instead prestige means gaining admiration or deference from others based on qualities such as knowledge, expertise or skill.⁴⁷

Prestige goods provide “costly and therefore honest signals” of skill, but anthropologists were puzzled as to why they were necessary. The finding was that the goods’ “signal

⁴⁵ Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 514.

⁴⁶ Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, ‘Status and World Order,’ 8.

⁴⁷ Aimée M. Plourde, ‘The Origins of Prestige Goods as Honest Signals of Skill and Knowledge,’ *Human Nature* 19, no. 4 (2008).

content”, or advertising value, saved considerable time and effort in interactions with others.⁴⁸ Applied to IR, this is a way of seeing prestige-building as a mechanism for effective communication. States will choose forms of prestige that will signal their suitability for recognition for certain kinds of status. In addition to this, one point from the anthropological example that is worth keeping in mind throughout the present study: signals need to be costly in order to be convincing. We can see in the case studies that follow that decision-makers appear to be strongly aware that policies that will significantly boost prestige are also costly ones.

An implication of dealing with higher-order beliefs is that when assessing any actor’s prestige, others will save time on studying that actor, and instead will survey the beliefs of the rest of the social group. This is O’Neill’s approach when he asserts that what matters is what “everybody” in the social group believes. We have seen that a prestigious activity generates strong higher-order beliefs, not private beliefs. O’Neill outlines that what counts are the abstract properties of an event: whether it is commonly known to be of concern to others; if it is a sudden event; if the event makes a clean break with existing circumstances; and whether it puts the acting state objectively higher on a scale of success compared with others.⁴⁹ As he points out, nuclear test explosions are particularly prestigious because “nuclear tests can be made ‘public events,’ in the technical sense that they generate not only knowledge that they have occurred but knowledge of others’ knowledge of that fact.”⁵⁰

Building on this approach, Jonathan Renshon notes that “events are not likely to change a state’s position unless they are highly public (visible to all actors in the community),

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ O’Neill, *Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige*, 15-16.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 2.

dramatic or salient (to capture the attention of potential observers), and convey unambiguous information.”⁵¹ Renshon argues that a lack of ambiguity is important. If no two actors agree, then there will be no change to the state’s status. As such, he points out that while war is well known in IR as a way to reveal capabilities, it is useful in the context of status because it also reveals behaviour and outcomes. In other words, war reveals private information, and the demonstration of capabilities and behaviours influences others in the social hierarchy to simultaneously re-calibrate their judgements.⁵²

The above is relevant in this research project if we are able to broaden the scope of research from the issue of inter-state war to other kinds of events that force simultaneous revaluations of prestige judgements. The case studies that follow emphasise the role of status crises in causing revaluations of previously existing strategies. A further extension of the above extends from inter-state conflict to activities that are symbolic of prestige. These examples are prestigious because of accepted social rules. As O’Neill notes in relation to public and contentious prestige-building activities, they “provide some grounded public evidence of a state’s qualities but their symbolic nature gives them special weight in observers’ estimates of how other observers are taking them.”⁵³ Examples might include states joining substantive international networks, with alliances, trade and institutional connections that are perceived as more valuable measures than diplomatic missions alone.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 526.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ O’Neill, *Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige*, 27-28.

⁵⁴ Zeev Maoz, *Networks of Nations : The Evolution, Structure, and Impact of International Networks, 1816-2001*, Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 226.

Decision-making and crises

This thesis does not try to distinguish between whether status is pursued in the interest of “self-esteem” or for instrumental ends. These purposes most likely overlap. Instead, the thesis focuses on whether specific actions in building prestige are perceived by states as helping to achieve status ambitions. This outcomes-based approach explains the context for states making cost-benefit analyses about prestige-earning activity.

“Actions are valued and chosen not for themselves, but as more or less efficient means to a further end.”⁵⁵ The thesis assumes that the behaviour is based on cost-benefit analyses, but decision-makers may frame their thinking in different ways under different circumstances. In particular, crises force revaluations of their thinking, leading to new policy outcomes.

Rational decision-making

This project assumes rationality among decision-makers, but in ways that are modified by biases under the kinds of circumstances seen in the case studies. This is consistent with the basic ontological and epistemological assumptions of the neoclassical realist approach to IR. The rationality that is assumed has been defined by Duncan Snidal as “individual goal-seeking under constraints;” but these goals can be not only self-regarding and material, but also other-regarding and normative or ideational.⁵⁶ As Jon Elster points out, we do not have to assume that actors are reward-maximising, only that they are reward-sensitive: “In general, of course, rational choice theory can easily accommodate non-material or non-selfish interests. What matters is whether the actors

⁵⁵ Jon Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 22.

⁵⁶ Duncan Snidal, 'Rational Choice and International Relations,' in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A Simmons (SAGE Publications Limited, 2013).

pursue their goals in an instrumentally rational manner, not whether these goals are defined in terms of material self-interest.”⁵⁷

One approach to possible biases in decision-makers’ mindsets, which looks at issues relevant to this project, is found in the work of Johnson and Tierney on a “Rubicon theory” of war.⁵⁸ The Rubicon theory is based on psychological theories of action phases, in which “processes of judgment and decision-making vary over time.”⁵⁹ It addresses the puzzle in IR that states are generally cautious, and concerned about factors such as the security dilemma, yet once war seems imminent, they become overconfident and contribute to a spiral of escalation. Johnson and Tierney address this using an argument that actors can make normal decisions mostly rationally, but after committing to a matter such as war, they become heavily influenced by psychological biases.

In explaining why actors may become more confident once they have committed to an action, Johnson and Tierney propose that a “deliberative” mind-set dominates in the phase before decisions are made, when options and possible outcomes are weighed and compared, while an “implemental” mind-set dominates the post-decisional phase, when the actor is carrying out the chosen course of action. They note that actors in the deliberative phase “adopt a relatively objective approach to judgment and decision-making, weighing the expected utility of different options in an effort to make the best selection.”⁶⁰ This approaches the rational actor model of decision making. The major

⁵⁷ Jon Elster, ‘Rational Choice History: A Case of Excessive Ambition,’ *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 3 (2000): 692.

⁵⁸ Dominic D. P. Johnson and Dominic Tierney, ‘The Rubicon Theory of War: How the Path to Conflict Reaches the Point of No Return,’ *International Security* 36, no. 1 (2011).

⁵⁹ Jack S. Levy, ‘Psychology and Foreign Policy Decision-Making,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology, 2nd Edition*, ed. Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁶⁰ Johnson and Tierney, ‘The Rubicon Theory of War: How the Path to Conflict Reaches the Point of No Return,’ 13-14.

differences between the phases involve the introduction of psychological biases. In the “implemental” mind-set, there are likely to be biases including reduced receptivity to new information, one-sided processing of information, vulnerability to cognitive dissonance, self-serving evaluations, and illusions of control.⁶¹ The net result is a spike in overconfidence.

The “Rubicon theory” has close parallels with this project’s central argument, under which prestige-building efforts vary under differing circumstances. This thesis draws on the Rubicon theory in order to operationalise the concepts of status and prestige in a causal sense. The case studies in this project show situations when decision-makers committed to increased prestige-building efforts, and once they had done so they appeared to be influenced by the same biases enumerated by Johnson and Tierney. This supports a prediction that they would take more risks to accumulate prestige, and it is consistent with neoclassical realist literature on biases in decision-making.⁶² Because of this, this project looks to apply the claims of this literature to the realms of operationalisation and applied empirical analysis. The above said, it is necessary to return to the cause of that increase in prestige-building efforts, the status crisis, which is explained below.

⁶¹ Ibid., 15-18.

⁶² Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; Wohlforth, ‘The Perception of Power.’; Janice Gross Stein, ‘Decision Making: Rational, Psychological, and Neurological Models,’ in *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, ed. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Oxford University Press, 2008).

In this project, the main driver of a change in cost-benefit calculations is a status crisis. To further develop the definition of a crisis given above,⁶³ a crisis is an event involving the intersection of threat, time and surprise; or as Stein puts it, “a threat to basic values that simultaneously creates a sense of urgency and uncertainty among policy makers.”⁶⁴ Richard Ned Lebow writes “the perception of risk generates the intensity and stress that are so characteristic of crisis,” while time constraints are “likely to have a significant impact on the nature of the decision-making process.”⁶⁵ A crisis is a “moment of truth”,⁶⁶ in which a full range of elements such as power configurations, interests, images and alignments tend to be more sharply clarified, as they are activated and focused on a single well-defined issue. For example, the effect of a crisis on perceptions of the likelihood of war has been described in the following terms: “In placid peacetime, this expectation of potential war remains in the background of the statesman’s consciousness and its effects are muted, diffuse and not easily observable. In a crisis, the expectation is dramatically elevated and its behavioural effects stand starkly revealed.”⁶⁷ Leaders tend to be risk averse when things are going well and relatively

⁶³ At p.19 above: “A threat to basic values that simultaneously creates a sense of urgency and uncertainty among policy makers,” a sudden event, and a catalyst for reassessing foreign policy goals and strategies.

⁶⁴ Stein, ‘Crisis Management: Looking Back to Look Forward.’ In a similar definition, Charles Hermann says: “A crisis is a situation that 1) threatens high-priority goals of the decision-making unit; 2) restricts the amount of time available for response before the decision is transformed, and 3) surprises the members of the decision-making unit by its occurrence.” Charles F. Hermann, ‘International Crisis as a Situational Variable,’ in *International Politics and Foreign Policy: A Reader*, ed. James N. Rosenau (New York: Free Press, 1969). This may be distinguished from other definitions such as Brecher and Wilkenfeld, who see an international crisis as an increase in disruptive interactions between states, raising the probability of armed conflict: Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, *A Study of Crisis* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 4.

⁶⁵ Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, 11-12.

⁶⁶ Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), 4.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

risk acceptant when things are going badly, when they face a crisis in which they are likely to lose or have lost something that matters to them.⁶⁸

As in an international security crisis, a status crisis is important because of the way it changes perceptions. Crises are referred to in this project as “functional” because of the way they crystallise perceptions about status and roles. In line with the neo-classical realist literature, this approach assumes that unlike structural theories of IR, the transmission of power to policy is “indirect and problematic.”⁶⁹ Status crises also have the property of “perceptual shocks”, as the term is used by Gideon Rose: “Single events [that] suddenly make decision makers aware of the cumulative effects of gradual long-term power trends.”⁷⁰ For example, Aaron Friedberg gives a historical case study in which crises punctuated the slow evolution of decision-makers’ thinking: “Change went forward as the result of gradual, diffuse intellectual developments that were consolidated and accelerated by periodic crises.”⁷¹ Or to put it bluntly, in a crisis “reality is stripped of clutter allowing cause and effect to be more readily identified.”⁷²

There may be a variety of reasons why a crisis causes a revaluation of preferences. The public nature of crises helps reveal actors’ preferences. Actions such as mobilisation must be a “costly signal” if the other side is to revise its beliefs (otherwise it is just “cheap talk”).⁷³ In addition, we can say we can recognise a crisis because it involves “a qualitative change in the communication processes amongst the actors involved.”⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Janice Gross Stein, ‘Crisis Behavior: Miscalculation, Escalation, and Inadvertent War,’ in *The International Studies Encyclopedia*, ed. Robert A. Denemark and Renee Marlin-Bennett (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

⁶⁹ Rose, ‘Neoclassical Realism,’ 157-58.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁷¹ Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905*, 288.

⁷² Uriel Rosenthal, Michael T. Charles, and Paul ‘t Hart, *Coping with Crises : The Management of Disasters, Riots, and Terrorism* (Springfield, Ill., U.S.A.: C.C. Thomas, 1989), 7.

⁷³ James D. Fearon, ‘Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes,’ *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 578.

⁷⁴ Michele Acuto, ‘Diplomats in Crisis,’ *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 22, no. 3 (2011): 525.

Other characteristics of the crisis situation include time limitations, which allow decision-makers to dispense with bureaucratic procedures; decision-makers' disagreements and antagonisms are subdued due to "a felt need for ultimate consensus"; and the threat to high-priority objectives means considerable energy is devoted to the problem and searching for innovative solution.⁷⁵ These are all conditions conducive to a clear communication of changing circumstances, which we saw were also the conditions for establishing new social facts. This is a further explanation for why a crisis situation is likely to lead to change in status perceptions.

The conceptual framework outlined in this chapter is employed to analyse the case studies that follow. Prestige is a general belief about an actor's positive qualities, while status is also a general belief, about an actor's position in a social hierarchy. The connection is that relevant prestige wins recognition for specific status roles, so status recognition may be seen as formalisation of prestige into a social hierarchy. In the case studies, status concerns and prestige-building were seen to be operationalised through a three-part process. First, during a phase of normal status-seeking, states accumulated different types of prestige in order to win recognition for a variety of status roles. Second, unexpected threats to that status recognition emerged that revealed information about the situation and forced a revaluation of strategy; as such, these situations are referred to as status crises. Third, states communicated their status claims more assertively through enhanced prestige-building. In this phase, decision-makers narrowed and concentrated their status goals and their policies to achieve these goals accepted greater costs and risks.

⁷⁵ Hermann, 'International Crisis as a Situational Variable,' 416.

4. JAPAN AND THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL, 1992-93

SECTION A. EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

Introducing the case

In January 1992, Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa told the United Nations Security Council that the body needed “to adjust its functions, composition, and other aspects so as to make it more reflective of the realities of the new era,” and this was “a process in which Japan is prepared to take an active part.”¹ While couched in typically diplomatic language, this was the first time a Japanese leader had made such a call for reform at the UN, and it carried a clear implication that Japan should take up a permanent UNSC seat.² The pursuit of the seat, aptly described by Ian Hurd as “a scarce international resource that confers immense status,”³ led Japan to embark on significant policy change and to display renewed ambition on the international stage. Yet Japan was also wracked by doubt amongst its politicians, officials and public, about whether it was prepared to take on the responsibilities that a permanent UNSC position entailed. By the end of 1993 the bid had stalled, with Japan never again to come so close to its goal.

¹ Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Diplomatic Bluebook* (1992).

² Previous calls for UNSC reform had been made by diplomats and foreign ministers. See: Akiko Fukushima, *Japanese Foreign Policy: The Emerging Logic of Multilateralism* (St. Martin's Press, 1999), 86.

³ Ian Hurd, 'Security Council Reform: Informal Membership and Practice,' in *The Once and Future Security Council*, ed. Bruce Russett (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 148.

The intensification of Japan's bid for a permanent UNSC seat in 1992-93 forms the first historical case study of this research project. It should be stressed at the outset that Japan has maintained a "bid" for a permanent Security Council role from the beginning of its UN membership through to the present. The literature that is reviewed below deals with the bid over a range of periods. However, this case study is narrowly focused on a specific period including the 1990-91 Gulf War and the period that the bid was intensified from 1992-93. This tracks decisions from when the bid was openly declared at the UN in early 1992, until the point in late 1993 when the government of Japan relaxed its campaign.

The case is dealt with in two sections: aside from introducing the case, this first section outlines what is already known, in the form of an outline of events and a review of the existing literature on Japan's bid for a permanent UNSC seat. The second section is an analysis of the case against the central arguments of this thesis. The existing literature is small but useful in the sense that it places the bid in the context of Japan's wider international relations, and provides detailed historical accounts of events. The latter is important because the intention of this thesis is to draw upon cases where it is already widely believed that status was a contributing factor in policy outcomes. This allows the research project to go more quickly to analysing the case to determine how status might have acted as a causal variable. As a result, the main aim of this literature review section is to examine the existing accounts to establish whether status motivations are a widely accepted factor in the case. This will identify whether this is a case where status is "most likely" to be a causal factor in policy outcomes.

The key literature on Japan's UNSC bid includes detailed studies by Drifte, Pan, Akiyama, Dore and others.⁴ These are invaluable for placing the case study in an historical context, given the fact that Japan's aspirations to a permanent Council role date from the very start of its UN membership. Doing so ensures that this project covers a full range of motivations for the bid. At the same time, as this section sets out, the literature leaves several puzzles unsolved. The most important gap concerns the actual function of status in Japan's United Nations aspirations.

While most scholars attribute a prestige or status motivation to the UNSC bid, the literature does not show us how this motivation may vary or have causal effect. This is the major focus of the case analysis in Section B of this chapter. A separate puzzle is worth mentioning: scholars frequently emphasise the value of a permanent UNSC seat as a prize in international politics, which raises the question of just why Japan's efforts appeared so modest or even half-hearted. A short answer is that Japan's unique domestic and international political sensitivities tended to mitigate against the benefits of the UNSC seat. A longer answer is that the analytical section will also help address this puzzle. By showing how perceptions of status varied over time, we gain some clues as to how political sensitivities might outweigh status attractions at one moment, but less so at another. First, however, this chapter turns to a review of the sequence of events.

⁴ See: Drifte, *Japan's Quest*; Dimitris Bourantonis, *The History and Politics of UN Security Council Reform* (London: Routledge, 2005); Liang Pan, *The United Nations in Japan's Foreign and Security Policymaking, 1945-1992: National Security, Party Politics, and International Status* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005); Nobumasa Akiyama, 'Japan's Failed Bid for a Permanent Seat on the UN Security Council,' in *Examining Japan's Lost Decades*, ed. Yoishi Funabashi (Routledge, 2015); C. S. Ahn, 'Government-Party Coordination in Japan's Foreign Policy-Making: The Issue of Permanent Membership in the UNSC,' *Asian Survey* 37, no. 4 (1997).

Outline of events

Japan's interest in a permanent UNSC seat can be traced back to immediately after Japan became the 80th UN member state in 1956.⁵ Only months after its admission, Japanese diplomats privately told allies that Japan was seeking a permanent seat, because it did not want to be disadvantaged in the first round of UN Charter reform that was taking place at the time.⁶ In terms of a long-term strategy, Reinhard Drifte assesses:

It is difficult to say exactly when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a policy of pursuing a Security Council seat, at least as a long-term goal. However, the available evidence suggests that right from the time Japan became a member of the UN, Japanese policy aimed at reinforcing tendencies among the UN membership in favour of revising the Charter, promoting Japan as a leading member of the UN, and strengthening the UN's role in keeping world peace.⁷

Diplomatic records indicate that Japan continued to privately express its interest in a seat through the 1960s.⁸ However, Japan's first public declaration of its Security Council aspirations was in October 1968, when its UN Ambassador told an American audience that Japan was "now entitled to claim a permanent seat in the Security Council so we may be able to contribute fully all that is in our power to the search for peace through the United Nations."⁹ This was followed by calls for UN reform by Japan's foreign minister,¹⁰ and indeed by the early 1970s, Washington was supporting Japan on the matter.¹¹ But with the growing membership and increasingly stark north-south divide in the General Assembly, by the mid-1970s momentum stalled.¹²

⁵ Pan, *The United Nations*, 289.

⁶ Ibid., 292.

⁷ Reinhard Drifte, 'Japan's Quest for a Permanent Seat on the Security Council,' *Asia-Pacific Review* 5, no. 2 (1998): 90.

⁸ Pan, *The United Nations*, 307.

⁹ New York Times, 18 October 1968, cited in Drifte, *Japan's Quest*, 26.

¹⁰ See addresses by Japanese Foreign Minister Kiichi Aichi to the UN General Assembly in 1969 and 1970, at UN documents NL730334 and NL740486 respectively.

¹¹ Pan, *The United Nations*, 323.

¹² Ibid., 327-28.

During the 1980s, Japan continued its engagement with the UN, winning two more elected UNSC seats and gaining the title of most-frequently elected non-permanent member.¹³ Japan also launched a number of measures aimed at increasing its profile on international security issues, such as Prime Minister Takeshita's 1988 "International Cooperation Initiative," a policy of enhancing Japan's international cooperation, overseas assistance, and cultural exchanges.¹⁴ However, while Japanese officials were keen to promote a greater Security Council role, Japan's political leaders declined to raise the matter outside of domestic audiences.¹⁵ This was despite the signs by the late 1980s that the Cold War deadlock was easing, and the Security Council was starting to become more influential – boosting the value of permanent membership to its non-superpower members.¹⁶

The literature highlights that Japan may have missed a crucial opportunity, around 1990-91, to enact reform of the Security Council. Dimitris Bourantonis writes that at that time the USSR, later Russia, was inclined to cooperate with the West as a way of compensating for the collapse of its superpower status, while China was also disposed towards cooperation in order to ensure that it was seen as worthy of Western aid in the post-Tiananmen period.¹⁷ In September 1990, Italy proposed that the British and French seats be merged into a single European Union one plus one for Japan. Such a move may have also allowed for a permanent seat for the newly reunified Germany, which was starting to call for UNSC reform. But neither aspirant was sufficiently prepared to campaign and overcome the vested interests on the Council in order to achieve the

¹³ Ibid., 332.

¹⁴ Ibid., 335.

¹⁵ Ibid., 333. Pan mentions a 1985 visit to Jakarta by an official from Japan's ruling LDP. The nationalist official advocated Japan's case for a UNSC seat, but was received coolly by the Indonesians.

¹⁶ David L. Bosco, *Five to Rule Them All: The UN Security Council and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 150-51.

¹⁷ Bourantonis, *The History and Politics of UN Security Council Reform*, 33-34.

reform. As Bourantonis writes, “The reluctance of Germany and Japan openly to pursue permanent seats for themselves during the period 1990-91 facilitated the permanent five’s task of containing debate on the Council reform issue.”¹⁸

The policy decisions in the immediate aftermath of the 1990-91 Gulf War make up the core of the case study, and they are analysed in detail in Section B of this chapter. To summarise, the sequence of events was as follows. Immediately after the conflict began with Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the UNSC passed resolutions imposing economic sanctions and authorising a naval blockade. As the stand-off between Iraq and the US-led coalition continued in late 1990, the short-lived government of Toshiki Kaifu tried to pass a hastily drafted Peace Cooperation Bill, which would have allowed Japan to send some military contribution to the Gulf, but this failed in the Diet. After the war, many in Japan felt that the country had received little credit for its financial contribution – \$12 billion – and the experience had highlighted the need for wide-ranging political and economic reforms.¹⁹ There was then an upsurge of activity in 1992 that included Prime Minister Miyazawa’s and Foreign Minister Watanabe’s speeches to the UN, statements by Japanese diplomats setting a timeline on the UNSC goal, and the passage of a revised international peacekeeping law. In December 1992, Japan joined a UN General Assembly resolution sponsored by 40 states that launched a Security Council reform discussion.²⁰ However, the bid lost momentum under Miyazawa’s successor Morihiro Hosokawa. After considerable debate, Hosokawa’s September 1993 address to the UN merely referenced general UNSC reform, not an enhanced Japanese role, marking a step back from Japan’s previous efforts.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., 36.

¹⁹ An example of its impact on Japanese thinking can be seen at: Ichirō Ozawa and Eric Gower, *Blueprint for a New Japan: The Rethinking of a Nation*, trans. Louisa Rubinfiën, vol. 2 (Kodansha International, 1994), 36-9.

²⁰ Akiyama, 'Japan's Failed Bid,' 279-80.

²¹ Ibid., 280-82.

By way of aftermath, in 1994 Tokyo became even more distracted by the collapse of Japan's post-war political system.²² Hosokawa's successor, Tomiichi Murayama, headed a fragile multi-party coalition, and the latter's speech to a special UN session of October 1995 made no reference to Japanese candidacy for permanent UNSC membership.²³ Since then Japan has continued to support proposals for UN reform, but without success.²⁴ Notably, the 1997 Razali Plan envisaged a two-step process to expand the Council to 24 members, but the proposal was abandoned in 2005. Indeed, one recent study of UN reform notes that the Razali Plan was asking smaller states "to virtually commit political suicide" by handing more veto power to others, and this was why there has been no expansion of permanent membership despite 20 years of reform proposals.²⁵ This aftermath is useful to keep in mind, but this case study is focused on the period during and close to 1992-93. Such a focus is conducive to studying status concerns as they affected Japan's international policy during a set period – not a timeline or analysis of Japan's success or failure in the UNSC, which is outside the scope of this project.

²² This system is often referred to as the "1955 system", which featured semi-permanent rule by the Liberal Democratic Party, alongside close cooperation between the bureaucracy, business and politicians. For an account of its rise and fall, see: Fukatsu Masumi, 'Whither Goes the 1955 System?', *Japan Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1995).

²³ Ahn, 'Government-Party Coordination in Japan's Foreign Policy-Making: The Issue of Permanent Membership in the UNSC,' 375.

²⁴ See for example: Toshitaka Takeuchi, 'Japan's Quest for UN Security Council Reform Going Nowhere,' *East Asia Forum*, 26 February 2016.

²⁵ Kishore Mahbubani, 'Council Reform and the Emerging Powers,' in *The UN Security Council in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Sebastian von Einsiedel, David Malone, and Stagno Ugarte (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2016), 166. The question of giving the veto power to new UNSC permanent or semi-permanent members is a key to UNSC reform debates. Japanese diplomats indicated that the current UNSC permanent five, while anachronistic, is tolerated by UN members because it ensures the veto power has limited legitimacy. Neither the UK nor France, for example, have cast vetos since 1989. A wholesale reform of the permanent membership would make the veto more legitimate, which would disadvantage UN members that failed to gain seats. This is an inherent contradiction to UNSC reform that has stymied efforts to date.

Existing explanations

Scholars have generated varying explanations for Japan's UNSC bid. These explanations encompass a three-part spectrum that is familiar to scholars of international relations – psychological or prestige explanations, instrumental foreign policy concerns including national security, and the influence of domestic politics on foreign policy decisions. They are concisely summarised by Drifte's *Japan's Quest for a Permanent Security Council Seat*, which is the most detailed history of Japan's Security Council ambitions:

The rationale for the bid of permanent Security Council membership... includes psychological elements (pride, prestige, need of recognition for multinational contributions and economic superpower status), bureaucratic elements (better information, enhancing the role of the Gaimusho [Foreign Ministry]), political engineering (a lever to forge a domestic consensus for more international burden sharing in response to external demands) and political goals (expanding multilateral diplomacy for a better balance against the country's US-focused bilateralism; a hedge against abandonment by the American security guarantor).²⁶

The literature surveyed in the following paragraphs mainly follows Drifte's list. A key additional explanation is proposed by some scholars involving the hopes of some in Japan that a high-profile international role would help Japan build "a new national narrative" which could be channelled back into the work of domestic institutional reform.²⁷

The aim of reviewing the existing explanations is not to weigh them up in order to declare which cause is "correct". As with each of the three case studies in this research project, Japan's UNSC bid had multiple causes, and this thesis is not trying to show that status was the sole or even dominant one. This chapter seeks only to show that international status was a significant cause, which can then provide a starting point for

²⁶ Drifte, *Japan's Quest*, 3. I have added the translation of Gaimusho to Foreign Ministry.

²⁷ Akiyama, 'Japan's Failed Bid,' 275.

analysis. The literature can also provide additional information that will be important in that analysis: what international roles did Japanese decision-makers perceive to be valuable in terms of status? For what purpose was status to be acquired? Were trade-offs seen between gaining status and other foreign policy goals? The following will highlight where some of the questions that can be answered in the existing literature in order to set the baseline for the analysis of when and how status concerns shaped Japan's decisions on UNSC reform from 1992-93.

Prestige and status explanations

Prestige explanations for Japan's bid are well established in the literature. As noted above, Drifte uses the term 'psychological elements' to collect concerns about pride, prestige and recognition for Japan's international contributions, and he concludes that "Japan's quest for permanent Security Council membership has undoubtedly been closely linked with the issue of prestige and status."²⁸ Overall, the literature divides prestige explanations between a category emphasising Japanese national dignity, and a category of Japanese pursuit of recognition for national achievements.

A key theme in Ronald Dore's study of Japan and the UN is the idea of "dignity", which he defines as a belief that a state should be treated with the proper respect, and which he presents as one of three pillars of national interest, alongside security and prosperity.²⁹ Dore's argument is that IR tends to understate the importance of dignity because established and powerful states can afford to dismiss it as a concern: "Anyone who does not show them respect can be easily dismissed."³⁰ By contrast, Japan's

²⁸ Drifte, *Japan's Quest*.

²⁹ Ronald Philip Dore, *Japan, Internationalism, and the UN*, The Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series (Routledge, 1997), 96.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

perennial self-perception of insecurity means that it is constantly discussing its national dignity. Indeed, Dore argues, dignity is inherently a concern of insecure societies: “The ones who have this sensitivity most markedly are likely to be both those who are upwardly and those who are downwardly mobile.”³¹ As a result, the desire among the Japanese public for dignity to become a goal of national policy is “probably stronger than among the publics of any other major country,” and this has attracted Japan to roles perceived as likely to boost its international standing.³² While Dore concedes that Japanese officials are likely to deny that the pursuit of dignity is of much importance, he sees it as nevertheless prevalent in the international relations of Japan. As Japan needs to be seen to be acting out of principle rather than self-interest, this explains the country’s focus on the UN and UN reform.³³

In his history of Japan’s involvement in the UN from 1945 to 1992, Liang Pan uses the term “honourable status” in a way that tracks closely to the above notions of dignity and pride. Pan stresses that Japan’s engagement with the UN from the very start was focused on one goal: “to put it plainly, to occupy an honourable status in international society.”³⁴ As he notes, when Japan finally joined the UN in December 1956, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu called it a “great leap in our country’s international status.”³⁵ A reflection of this is also found in the way, after a difficult campaign for an elected Security Council seat in 1965, a Japanese delegate said it was clear Japan was still “not in a position to be proud of its status as a big power and feel relaxed during [UN] elections.”³⁶ Pan’s conclusion is that the mismatch between Japan’s enthusiasm for

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 98.

³³ Ibid., 98-99.

³⁴ Pan, *The United Nations*, 255.

³⁵ Ibid., 289.

³⁶ Tamio Amau, *Takokukan gaikōron: Kokuren gaikō no jissō* [Multilateral diplomacy: the realities of UN diplomacy] (Tokyo: PMC Shuppan, 1990), 338, quoted in *ibid.*, 306.

greater roles in the UN, compared with its lack of substantive policy initiatives, meant that frequently “Japanese policymakers’ quest for equal or higher international status through the UN looked more like a policy of prestige for its own sake.”³⁷

Another take on the idea is presented by Nobumasa Akiyama under the terminology of “esteem”. Akiyama notes that, faced with the rise of emerging powers and the likely decline of Japan’s own economic influence from its peak, Japan sought the UNSC role in order to shore up its esteem in the eyes of the international community:

Japan wanted to step forward to a new status, beyond that of a good loser, and a permanent seat was seen as the symbol of that achievement... by accomplishing a reform of the UN and gaining a seat in the Security Council, the hope was to create a feeling of having wiped the slate clean of any negative legacy left after World War II, including the bitter taste of defeat. The change that Japan had brought to the UN would signify to the world that Japan was genuinely reintegrated into the postwar global governance system and was now a legitimate major power.³⁸

And a similar note may be found in the work of Kenneth Pyle, who likewise sees the purpose of acquiring a greater UN role as delivering to Japan “dignity and recognition as a first-rank nation.”³⁹ Pyle argues that Japan remains an ‘unsatisfied’ power:

Although Japan has become a status-quo power with a substantial stake in existing international rules and international governance, its ambition to rise in the international hierarchy of prestige and to establish its national dignity, in its own eyes as well as in the eyes of the world, remains unsatisfied. Japan still seeks its place in the sun.⁴⁰

While sometimes presented using differing terminology, the theme of dignity recurs across the literature. The most important point for this project is that it is closely linked to Japan’s UN roles, lending credence to the idea that dignity – insofar as it relates to status – was a factor in Japan’s UNSC bid.

³⁷ Ibid., 345.

³⁸ Akiyama, 'Japan's Failed Bid,' 274.

³⁹ Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 106.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 373-74.

The second category of psychological explanation focuses on the way a UNSC seat would accord Japan recognition for its postwar national achievements, especially its economic success. These explanations are sometimes cited by the same works that note the “dignity” explanation, but usually with a chronological distinction. It is not surprising that while the dignity aspects were most important during Japan’s initial postwar recovery, material strength justifications become more important after Japan’s export-led economic achievements from the 1960s onwards, and then its greater international role in a range of spheres. Richard Samuels, for example, refers to calls for a new grand strategy “based on respect.”⁴¹ In the words of one Japanese politician, the idea is that after decades of achievement, the right to a permanent UNSC seat was seen as natural – “as natural as getting the right to vote at the age of twenty.”⁴²

Whereas the aspiration to dignity was seldom overtly expressed by Japanese leaders – it is mostly the interpretation of scholars based on Japanese behaviour – a belief in recognition for achievement is frequently found in Japanese statements. Histories of Japan and the UN note that this belief started to become evident as Japan raised its UN ambitions from the 1960s onwards. For example, speaking in 1961, Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda believed Japan should be one of three key players in the Western world alongside Europe and the US, and he supported an early campaign for Japan to become President of the UN General Assembly. He told US representatives that Japan’s interest in the Presidency was “attributable in part to the growth of Japan’s real power.”⁴³ Similarly, in 1967 the veteran diplomat Senjin Tsuruoka – who had been a Japanese official at the League of Nations – told the Japanese press that Japan was becoming a major contributor to the UN budget, and “if our country wants to gain a voice

⁴¹ Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan : Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Cornell University Press, 2007), 187.

⁴² Conservative former diplomat Okazaki Hisahiko, quoted in Drifte, *Japan's Quest*, 97.

⁴³ Pan, *The United Nations*, 293.

appropriate to this contribution” it would have to attain the status of “big power” like the Permanent Five.⁴⁴ As UN Ambassador the following year he announced to an American audience that Japan was “now entitled to claim a permanent seat in the Security Council so we may be able to contribute fully all that is in our power to the search for peace through the United Nations.”⁴⁵

These views indicate a transition in Japanese self-perceptions from an emphasis on dignity to one of recognition. Drifte sees the bid at first motivated by views about “Japan’s status in the world”: memories of membership of the Council of the League of Nations, the desire to be part of the “international mainstream”, and peaceful exceptionalism. These beliefs were then augmented by the desire for recognition of Japan’s material achievements:

With Japan’s growing economic strength and involvement in multilateral diplomacy and development aid, the longing for prestige became reinforced by the desire for recognition of its newly won status as an economic power and for greater equality with the P5.⁴⁶

The emphasis on recognition continues through to the period of the case study. A key addition is that some Japanese leaders started to view peacekeeping as a useful way to boost Japan’s standing internationally. As Liang Pan notes, Liberal Democratic Party politicians believed the UN Peacekeeping Bill of 1990 would help give Japan an “honourable status” and “appropriate treatment at the UN commensurate with our country’s international power.”⁴⁷ As with the theme of dignity, the theme of recognition recurs across the literature in close relation to the United Nations. This is evidence to support the argument that these status-related concerns played a role in the UNSC campaign.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 307.

⁴⁵ Tsuruoka quoted in: Sam Pope Brewster, ‘Japanese Seeking Full Council Seat: UN Delegate Says Tokyo Wants Permanent Role,’ *New York Times*, 18 October 1968.

⁴⁶ Drifte, *Japan’s Quest*, 187.

⁴⁷ Pan, *The United Nations*, 336.

Instrumental foreign policy explanations

The literature frequently lists traditional foreign policy explanations for the bid as a factor alongside other explanations such as prestige or domestic politics. In particular, the bid is seen as both a hedge against over-reliance on the US alliance and as a potential reinforcement to it, and it is also seen as a way that Japanese diplomats hoped to gain information and influence that could advance foreign policy objectives.

Scholars emphasise that a greater role in the UNSC would help Japan further diversify its engagement with international security away from the relationship with the United States, while a more influential Japan could simultaneously be a more useful ally to the US. For example, Drifte emphasises that expanded multilateral roles would not only give balance to Japanese foreign policy, which had been otherwise focused on US ties, but also provide insurance against any threat of US abandonment.⁴⁸ Japanese officials have also seen the UNSC bid as a way to respond to constant US demands for “burden-sharing” in the UN, to smooth trade frictions, help ensure Japan did not appear overly self-interested, and to give Japan’s bureaucracy opportunities for cooperation. “At the same time, multilateral diplomacy provides hedges against weaknesses, contradictions and possible failures of US-focused bilateralism,” especially considering the limitations of the US security guarantee, and Japan’s wish to encourage greater multilateral engagement by the US itself.⁴⁹

In addition to hedging against over-reliance on the US relationship, some scholars also see an expanded UN role for Japan as strengthening the same relationship. Akiyama

⁴⁸ Drifte, *Japan's Quest*, 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 54.

points out that an increased UN role is actually a form of burden-sharing within Japan's US alliance: Article I of the US-Japan security treaty stipulates that both parties "will endeavour in concert with other peace-loving countries to strengthen the United Nations."⁵⁰ As noted above, Japanese officials also believed that US-Japan relations would be strengthened if greater Japanese activity in the UN bolstered American interest and commitment in multilateral institutions.⁵¹ Robert Immerman records that this motivation became more pressing during the 1980s, as Japanese officials feared that US isolation in the UN would expose division between Washington and Tokyo, undermining the security relationship. Immerman gives the example of a 1985 Japanese-led initiative that encouraged the US to pay its UN budget arrears, which in turn restored close cooperation between the US and Japanese delegations in New York. This was a case where a greater Japanese role in the UN had enhanced the bilateral relationship.⁵²

The other key area where the UNSC is linked to foreign policy interests concerns Japan's access to the confidential discussions of the major powers. Indeed, improved access to information about world affairs was one of Japan's original motivations for seeking a high-profile role in the UN.⁵³ The literature emphasises the way this was sheeted home during the Gulf conflict. Immerman notes that Japan was wrong-footed at the time by the seriousness of the crisis, whereas "had Japan been a permanent member of the Security Council, it would have been privy to all the information in the hands of the [Permanent] Five and so would not have been caught off guard by the

⁵⁰ Text of the *Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan* available at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html>

⁵¹ Akiyama, 'Japan's Failed Bid,' 287, 288.

⁵² Robert M Immerman, 'Japan in the United Nations,' in *Japan: A New Kind of Superpower?*, ed. Craig Garby and Mary Brown Bullock (Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 187-88.

⁵³ Drifte, *Japan's Quest*, 12-13.

sudden decisions of the council.”⁵⁴ Similarly, scholars recount the grievances of Japanese diplomats who recalled that, despite representing a major UN budget contributor, during 1990-91 they were left standing in corridors in the UN headquarters outside closed doors waiting for word of Security Council deliberations.⁵⁵ To be sure, part of this goes back to the issue of prestige, but it is important to note that scholars also see the quality of Japan’s access to UNSC deliberations as a “realist” national interest, regardless of prestige aspects.⁵⁶

Domestic political explanations

As is common in domestically-focused foreign policy analysis, domestic political explanations fall into two categories: bureaucratic politics, and the pursuit by leaders of parliamentary and electoral agendas. Bureaucratic explanations centre on the role of Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) as the key driver of the bid within the Japanese political system. At a general level, MOFA is seen as a keeper of national prestige, and as an organisation is keen to enhance its own status and prestige in the domestic context.⁵⁷ This said, MOFA was also the element of Japanese government most keenly sensitive to the need for access to information that was noted above. This attraction became more noticeable at the end of the Cold War because, as David Malone remarks, “the hermetic nature of [the Security Council’s] working methods drew greater attention at a time when its decisions were proving genuinely important.”⁵⁸ In addition, Japanese officialdom was attracted to the goal of holding a permanent UNSC seat as it

⁵⁴ Immerman, 'Japan in the United Nations,' 189.

⁵⁵ Drifte, *Japan's Quest*, 65.

⁵⁶ Glenn D. Hook, *Japan's International Relations: Politics, Economics and Security* (London: Routledge, 2001), 313.

⁵⁷ Drifte, *Japan's Quest*, 95.

⁵⁸ David M. Malone, 'Security Council,' in *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*, ed. Sam Daws and Thomas G. Weiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 131.

would save Japan the considerable effort, time and expense of campaigning for elected seats on a regular basis.⁵⁹

The other kind of domestic political motivations concern what some refer to as “political engineering” – the belief among some Japanese leaders that a role at the pinnacle of the UN system would mobilise domestic support for their agendas. Drifte notes that many leaders believed a permanent UNSC role would bridge the gap between Japan’s pacifist public and more realist aspects of foreign policy, including the pragmatism of the 1951 US-Japan Security Treaty.⁶⁰ Masayuki Tadokoro, writing in 1997, asserted that a permanent Security Council seat would help Japan’s foreign ministry overcome its friction with the then-socialist government, and Japan’s enduring pacifist and isolationist camp:

The UN offers a workable and effective framework for Japan to become more active in the pursuit of its foreign policy because the biggest obstacle to an active Japan is its ‘legitimacy deficit,’ both externally and internally. The UN can legitimise Japan’s active roles in global and regional affairs by more closely involving Japan in its decision-making process.⁶¹

Similarly, the United Nations University’s Sebastian von Einsiedel notes that a precedent can be seen in the way UNSC membership in the 1970s caused Beijing to become more engaged with the UN than outsiders had expected.⁶² The difficulty was that as such agendas became more apparent to the Japanese public, concerns rapidly grew that the UNSC role would lead to unacceptable commitments to peacekeeping or other foreign security commitments.⁶³ Thus an irony was that this motivation, of enhancing domestic legitimacy, also in some part became the undoing of the Japan’s UNSC ambitions.

⁵⁹ Drifte, *Japan's Quest*, 96; Hook, *Japan's International Relations: Politics, Economics and Security*, 313.

⁶⁰ Drifte, *Japan's Quest*, 12-13.

⁶¹ Masayuki Tadokoro, 'A Japanese View on Restructuring the Security Council,' in *The Once and Future Security Council*, ed. Bruce Russett (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 127.

⁶² Sebastian von Einsiedel, interview with the author, 4 April 2016.

⁶³ Drifte, *Japan's Quest*, 189.

A further aspect of domestic political agendas is the idea that the UNSC role could motivate domestic political reform within Japan itself. Akiyama notes the desire of leaders to build “a new national narrative” that would provide impetus for reconfiguring domestic institutions.⁶⁴ He says Japan needed this narrative to be accepted across the political spectrum “to provide a common sense of direction for the whole country to locate its position in the changing international community.”⁶⁵ As discussed in the following section, the aim of using foreign policy to advance domestic agendas is a recurring theme in Japanese politics since modernisation. Yet the near-impossibility of achieving such a consensus is one of the reasons given for the failure of the bid in this literature.

Assessment of the literature as a baseline for status assumptions

The existing literature provides viable grounds for assuming this case to be one where status was “most likely” a causal factor in outcomes. This research project accepts this assumption because the terms used by scholars, such as dignity, prestige, and recognition, can be connected to status perceptions in multiple ways. First, the theme of “dignity” can be seen as part of the long-term cultural background within which decision-makers put value on national prestige and status. Second, the theme of “recognition” goes to the question of whether a state is performing, or under-performing, in terms of status. In addition to the psychological explanations, this section

⁶⁴ Akiyama, 'Japan's Failed Bid,' 275.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 290.

explains that even the instrumental explanations relating to foreign policy and domestic politics also relate to issues of status.

Dignity and recognition

Although “dignity” is a frequently used term in this context, scholars of the international relations of Japan have done little to define or conceptualise the term. However, dignity can consistently be found in close proximity to “respect” and “honour” in the vocabulary of status in IR.⁶⁶ The term can refer to a quality of a state, sometimes as a synonym for honour,⁶⁷ or it may be a manner of treatment by other actors, for example in a joint phrase such as “dignity and respect.”⁶⁸ Based on the usage in the literature, a practical definition of dignity might be as a minimum treatment to be expected by an actor, especially when the actor complies with social codes. A corollary of this is that the loss of dignity is likely to constitute humiliation.⁶⁹ This definition lets us relate dignity as used in the IR of Japan with broader notions of dignity in political science.

Two themes are helpful in conceptualising dignity. First, in a useful discussion of the concept of dignity as a kind of minimal respect, John Fitzgerald notes Francis Fukuyama’s argument that a basic political motivation is the struggle for “recognition.” Indeed, a common source of nationalism is the politics of indignation over a lack of desired recognition of one kind or another.⁷⁰ As Isaiah Berlin put it, nationalism

⁶⁶ As was described in a previous chapter, respect is where actors treat another according to recognition of a certain status, while honour is a state’s reputation for complying with the social code of its peers.

⁶⁷ Dafoe and Caughey, ‘Honor and War,’ 351.

⁶⁸ Emilian Kavalski, ‘The Struggle for Recognition of Normative Powers: Normative Power Europe and Normative Power China in Context,’ *Cooperation and Conflict* 48, no. 2 (2013): 259.

⁶⁹ A detailed discussion of this may be found at: Daniel Statman, ‘Humiliation, Dignity and Self-Respect,’ *Philosophical Psychology* 13, no. 4 (2000).

⁷⁰ Fitzgerald uses the term *ressentiment* for this basic indignation. John Fitzgerald, ‘China and the Quest for Dignity,’ *The National Interest*, no. 55 (1999): 48.

frequently occurs from “a wounded or outraged sense of human dignity, the desire for recognition.”⁷¹ This helps to explain the theme that frequently appears in the literature of political leaders perceiving a lack of international recognition, and therefore wishing to restore national dignity. It readily corresponds to Japan’s experience of occupation and treatment as an enemy power after 1945, and also its leaders’ feelings of insecurity about sovereignty due to Japan’s dependent post-occupation security relationship with the United States. One could also hypothesise that such feelings of humiliation might be pervasive in domestic politics and would provide a powerful incentive to national leaders to rectify the situation. A second way of conceptualising dignity is to emphasise the comparative nature of the experience. What a state deems to be a minimum acceptable level of respect may vary depending upon what the state has become accustomed to. In Japan’s case, humiliation was not merely due to the post-1945 occupation, but also its removal from the role of recognised great power, a role it had struggled hard to achieve in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Whereas Japan had once sat on the Council of the League of Nations, it did not gain even ordinary membership of the United Nations until 1956. Here it is appropriate to use Joshua Freedman’s ideas of status insecurity and temporality, and his argument that states “engage in self-evaluation and derive self-esteem through temporal comparisons with their past.”⁷² Putting the above together, when scholars refer to Japan’s concern about dignity, they are referring to the Japanese polity being particularly concerned about Japan being recognised as a fully sovereign state. It is seen in Japan’s insistence on being restored to levels of respect consistent with the recollection of the political memory.

⁷¹ Isaiah Berlin, *The Sense of Reality : Studies in Ideas and Their History* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 252.

⁷² Freedman, ‘Status Insecurity and Temporality in World Politics,’ 798.

The scholarship on Japan that highlights “recognition” fits readily alongside the theoretical literature on status in IR. The aspects most relevant to this case study concern Japan, as a rising power in the postwar period, seeking recognition for its material achievements but believing that international recognition lagged behind. This is generally theorised in the status literature as the problem of status inconsistency or a status deficit, which states are keen to resolve because proper status recognition is valuable for coordinating expectations of deference in their interactions with other actors.⁷³ As noted above, Japanese decision-makers openly stated a belief that Japan’s status was not consistent with its economic and diplomatic contribution. This is where the literature on the case deviates from the status theory literature. The latter assumes that status deficits may lead to conflict. Jonathan Renshon, for example, proposes that initiation of conflict is “one way that states seek to alter the beliefs of other members of the international community” about their status. According to Volgy, et al:

We suggest that status underachievers – given their muscular portfolios but unmatched status attribution – will seek to resolve uncertainty around their status by competing more aggressively than overachievers to create larger roles for themselves in global affairs.⁷⁴

This leaves a key gap in terms of explaining why, while Japanese leaders frequently expressed concern about a status deficit, there was no sign of Japan acting unusually aggressively to rectify the situation. It also fails to explain why the main course of action taken by Tokyo was to seek recognition via a multilateral institution rather than through pursuit of war.

⁷³ See the detailed discussion in the literature review chapter; key references include: Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 515; Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, ‘Reputation and Status,’ 382-83; Volgy et al., ‘Major Power Status in International Politics,’ 10-11.

⁷⁴ Volgy et al., ‘Status Considerations in International Politics,’ 63-64.

It is important to recognise that there may be overlap between intrinsic and instrumental motivations for action such as the UNSC bid. Drifte puts it simply that “the ultimate international accolade [is] a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.”⁷⁵ This may be attractive to a state for some of the status-related reasons mentioned above – the restoration of dignity, and status consistency. But the seat could also be seen as a great prize because of its instrumental benefits. These included the opportunity to strengthen the US alliance and to avoid over-reliance upon it, and the benefits access to privileged diplomatic information. Indeed, a role such as UNSC permanent member is unlikely to remain prestigious unless states continue to draw material benefits from it. What is necessary in establishing the baseline for the central argument of this thesis is to show that Japanese decision-makers regarded the seat as carrying a bundle of material and subjective benefits that they associated with national status.

The discussion in the literature of Japanese domestic politics is an interesting one. It highlights a perceived benefit that is not emphasised in the status theory scholarship, which is that leaders believed status would let them propose new agendas to the electorate. This contrasts with the status literature, which tends to focus on demands by the electorate for leaders to acquire prestige for the state for the sake of foreign policy benefits.⁷⁶ The distinctly Japanese emphasis on bringing status gains back home to act as domestic political assets provides an additional explanation as to why Japanese leaders would be motivated to acquire national status. By the early 1990s Japanese

⁷⁵ Reinhard Drifte, *Japan's Foreign Policy in the 1990s: From Economic Superpower to What Power?* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996), 132.

⁷⁶ Wood, 'Prestige in World Politics,' 391.

leaders saw the need for both foreign and domestic policy reform, yet lacked domestic mandates. This provides a plausible explanation for the timing of the UNSC bid.

Gaps and next steps

The key finding of this section is that status did appear to be a significant concern in the international relations of Japan at the time of the UNSC bid. Issues of status concerned decision-makers in two major ways: there had been a long-running theme that Japan needed to restore or maintain its international dignity, and Japanese leaders had a strong interest in Japan's status consistency (that is, that it was recognised for a status consistent with its material qualities). In addition, the pragmatic benefits of a UNSC seat overlapped with any beliefs that it was an asset worth acquiring for status reasons. This section has also highlighted that the literature provides several reasons why Japan has prioritised multilateralism and was likely to put value on holding high-status positions in global institutions.

Key gaps remain in the literature about Japan and the UNSC. Even though the literature highlights the status attractions of a permanent UNSC seat, it does not explain how status concerns specifically influenced Japanese policies toward the UNSC at any particular time. The literature does describe Japan's status concerns evolving as the desire for national dignity was complemented by a wish for greater recognition of Japan's material achievements, and Japanese statements regarding the UNSC can be seen developing alongside that trend. But the literature does not explain how long-term status interests affected specific policies, such as the decision to announce the bid in 1992. It also does not explain how status concerns might have been more or less important than the instrumental foreign policy considerations or domestic political

concerns that the literature also says motivated the bid. Ultimately the puzzle is left as to why, if a UNSC permanent seat is such a prize, Japan's pursuit of it was so conservative for so long, yet for a brief period was surprisingly bold and assertive.

These basic findings provide the starting point for the major analysis of the case. This analysis will follow in three main sections. First, it will show how the underlying and long-term beliefs about status, noted above, played out in terms of normal status-seeking by Japan in the leadup to the Gulf War. Second, the analysis assesses whether the Gulf conflict provided a significant crisis and caused decision-makers to believe that status roles that Japan valued were under threat. Third, the analysis will examine whether responses to the Gulf War constituted a variation in Japan's prestige seeking in response to that shock.

SECTION B. ANALYSIS OF THE CASE

Analysing the case

Many Japanese diplomats will speak enthusiastically about acquiring a permanent seat in the Security Council. It is described as both a pillar of prestige and as a lever for increasing Japan's practical international influence. Former Japanese Ambassador to the United Nations Kenzo Oshima says: "Being in the Council, even as a non-permanent member, raises the prestige of the country and its level of influence. This is because there are other countries that approach you, seeking support... These countries come to you, to raise their chance of success, and that indirectly raises the prestige of your country."⁷⁷ Meanwhile former Permanent Representative Tsuneo Nishida says a permanent seat would be "a wonderful tool in order to make Japanese diplomacy richer and a way of playing a more important and more responsible international role."⁷⁸ Of course, this talk of the attraction of the seat can only raise the question of why Japan has never been successful in gaining one. The place of this case study is to show how status aspirations played a key role in Japan's UNSC bid. By understanding the role status played, we can also understand Japan's lack of success in this aspiration.

This analytical section divides the historical timeline into three phases, mapping out the way Japan's pursuit of status changed under differing circumstances. The first phase is referred to as the "normal" status-seeking phase. During this phase, Japan sought to gain status by building prestige in selected areas of international activity. One of these areas was the United Nations, and it is instructive to observe the actual activity that Japan

⁷⁷ Kenzo Oshima, interview with the author, 22 December. Japan's mission to the UN is headed by the Permanent Representative, commonly referred to as Japan's "UN Ambassador", but deputies to this position may also carry the rank of Ambassador.

⁷⁸ Tsuneo Nishida, interview with the author, 17 March 2016.

engaged in in order to gain prestige there. The second phase deals with a “status crisis”. In this phase, the causal role of status changes. The section is asking whether there was a crisis point in Japanese decision-makers’ attitudes towards the country’s international status position. Building on these two phases, the third phase involves a move to “enhanced” prestige-building activity. This part aims to describe outcomes from variation in status perceptions. This phase explores the new behaviours or activity that make up observable outcomes from the status crisis.

The judgements in this section are necessarily qualitative assessments of known events. For example it is necessary to assess some periods as making up normal status-seeking; as a status crisis; and as examples of enhanced prestige-building. This is the point where the original interviews conducted for this chapter are important. Used in combination with published accounts, they let us put weight on particular parts of the record that were perceived by decision-makers in terms such as shock, surprise or disappointment. We can then consider whether courses of action were, for example, unusually provocative or assertive. In this way, the historical account, drawn from existing literature, is reassessed in this chapter through specific use of the qualitative judgements of interviewees.

The “normal” status-seeking phase

This section assesses Japan’s status-seeking behaviour up to the period of the case study in the early 1990s. The evidence shows that there is enough continuity to this behaviour to call it “normal”, in contrast to the phase of crisis that ensued after the Gulf conflict. In the first half of this section the study describes the various goals of Japanese status-

seeking that came together to create relatively consistent behaviour. Most of these goals appear in scholarly work on Japan, but has not been analysed in the context of Japan's UNSC bid. The thesis has also used interviews to identify which goals were most relevant to the bid. The second half of this section describes the practical activity Japan undertook in the UN in order to build status. Overall, the section shows that there was an established and reasonably consistent sense of purpose and pattern of activity in Japan's diplomacy. This is the situation that would be disrupted by the status crisis after 1990.

Japan's status aims

To analyse the case, it is necessary to examine the patterns that Japanese status-seeking followed in the years leading up to 1992. Then to explain the drivers of status-seeking, we need to refer back to longstanding cultural factors and the circumstances of Japan's modernisation in the 19th century, which we can then relate to the circumstances of postwar Japan. The upshot of these cultural and historical factors was that on the eve of the case study Japanese status-seeking was the result of at least three long-term factors. These were: historical legacies making Japan sensitive to foreign perceptions of its status; cultural beliefs about social and international hierarchy that had been frequently exploited by the Japanese state for domestic political ends; and the way that Japan's modern history was marked by dramatic changes in its material capabilities, which needed to be recognised in the form of changed international status. These combined with the more immediate circumstances of postwar Japan. Altogether, they help explain both a high consciousness of national status in the Japanese polity, and also the level of status that Japan sought internationally.

The first driver of Japanese status-seeking was the need to prioritise prestige-building activity that would directly secure equality with other sovereign states. This is proclaimed in Japan's postwar constitution as the desire "to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace."⁷⁹ This corresponds to the concept of "dignity" discussed in the previous section, and reflects a longstanding historical belief that a base level of status was essential to survival. In part this was because when Japan re-entered international society in the second half of the 19th century, it was vital for the country to imitate and compete with the imperialistic Western powers. These external factors engaged with existing cultural beliefs in several ways. Japan was immediately presented with external models for status comparison, as Marius Jansen notes:

Admiration, as well as irritation, could serve to strengthen the awareness Meiji Japanese had of a 'class' distinction among nations and leaders; together they stirred the determination of Meiji Japan to break free of its second-class standing in the world of nation states;⁸⁰

In addition, international society was ordered such that Japan could not ignore such comparisons even if it wished to. Japanese historian Akira Iriye puts it that: "History was marching upward and onward toward an eventual state of human perfection, and all human societies were ranked by how far they had advanced on this march."⁸¹ Finally, the development of material power did not only allow ascendancy, but was the key to genuine equality.⁸² For Japan – the first non-Western modern power – the lesson was that status-seeking was not a luxury, but necessary for minimal recognition of Japan's sovereign equality with other modern states. This historical context helps to explain the

⁷⁹ Constitution of Japan available at:

https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html. I am grateful to Professor Takashi Inoguchi for highlighting the importance of this part of the Constitution (interview with the author, 14 March 2016).

⁸⁰ Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 335.

⁸¹ Akira Iriye, 'Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status,' in *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 5, the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 734-35.

⁸² Janet Hunter, *The Emergence of Modern Japan: An Introductory History since 1853* (New York/London: Longman, 1989), 22.

concern for national dignity that appears in much literature about Japan, and was highlighted in the previous section. This context indicates that Japan was likely to direct its efforts to building prestige in ways that would demonstrate national dignity, such as equality in international institutions. It also helps explain why Japan was very early to mention its interest in positions such as a UNSC seat, but took a long time to take action toward this goal.

A second priority in status-seeking was to fulfil promising domestic agendas. A long-term aspect of Japan's status-seeking has been the way cultural understandings about social hierarchy played a role in domestic political agendas. In Japan's case, hierarchical social beliefs had been reinforced since national consolidation in the late 16th century, as civil disorder was suppressed by assigning people to "their proper stations in society."⁸³ As with all aspects of national culture, it is difficult to claim that any one value is a causal factor in a state's international relations.⁸⁴ However, there is evidence that widely held beliefs in Japan about social hierarchy were also harnessed as a tool of politics. This made it attractive for politicians to look to international institutions as locations where Japan could achieve a visible ranking that would be widely understood by the public.

To illustrate the way this has occurred in Japan, historians such as Kenneth Pyle go back to the way that imperial Japan sought recognition as a state of the "first rank": "The strength of Japan's inherited rank consciousness prompted an instinctive need for recognition of its status in the hierarchy of nations, and the values of hierarchy provided a behavioural norm that focused and intensified the realist drive for national

⁸³ Peter Duus, *Modern Japan*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 6.

⁸⁴ See Gray on "Strategic Culture as Context" (chapter 5 in: Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

power.”⁸⁵ At the same time, elites often saw their role as guardians and promoters of national prestige as part of their credibility, and this was sold to domestic constituencies as part of their right to rule. In imperial Japan, Akira Iriye argues, patriotism, militarism and imperialism became accepted as essential to the nation’s existence, with the modern state and its imperial power seen as two sides of the same coin. “Japan’s drive to great-power status during the Meiji era, then, was one device by which the nation’s leaders sought to establish a connection between domestic and external relations.”⁸⁶ As such, prestige seeking was not simply an inevitable outcome of Japanese culture: it was also deliberate government policy. After 1945, this continued to reflect the way that that internal political debates gave rise to new consensus strategies for the postwar era.⁸⁷ By focusing on the UN, Japanese politicians continued to focus on prestige-building that could achieve not only foreign but also domestic policy ends.

The third enduring factor driving Japanese status-seeking was the need for recognition of the country’s material capabilities. As noted in the preceding section, this point has been recognised in the existing literature on the case. However, importance of status recognition to Japan deserves further analysis because the history of Japan is marked by exceptionally abrupt changes in material circumstances. Japan emerged suddenly from isolation to become a modernised, imperial power; in 1945 it was devastated and occupied; yet by the 1960s it had hosted the Olympic Games and rebounded as one of the major global economies.⁸⁸ These unusually sudden variations meant that Japan needed to actively seek recognition for its prestigious qualities, especially compared to

⁸⁵ Pyle, *Japan Rising*, 109.

⁸⁶ Iriye, 'Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status,' 782.

⁸⁷ Peter J Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (Columbia University Press, 1996).

⁸⁸ On the importance of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics to Japanese self-perceptions about restoring national dignity and legitimacy, see: Ian Buruma, *Inventing Japan, 1853-1964*, Modern Library ed., Modern Library Chronicles (New York: The Modern Library, 2003).

other states that had demonstrated prestige for a longer time. This is consistent with the understanding of status not as something gained simply by holding capabilities, but as an attribute that has to be accorded by approval from other powers in the international community.⁸⁹ For Japan, this meant that high-profile positions in multilateral institutions had an outsize quality, prized beyond their immediate diplomatic benefits. As an example, Ambassador Nishida describes the way Japan's accession to the OECD in 1964 was a "process of recognition and acknowledgement and appreciation by the international society... There was a kind of euphoria. Cabinet was in a rapture, a milestone and Japan could confirm its efforts since world war two had been recognised and rewarded."⁹⁰ A similar valuation of recognition through institutional roles was seen in 1975 when Japan became part of the Group of Seven leading economies, which "helped transform the Japanese public's perception of its own country."⁹¹

The above factors interact with immediate international circumstances to explain Japan's post-war focus on its standing in international institutions. Japan may have been distinctive after 1945, compared to most defeated states, in maintaining a long-term pacifist policy. But analysts such as Akitoshi Miyashita see the pacifist policy as an entirely rational response to the existence of the US security guarantee.⁹² Indeed, Japanese status-seeking under the postwar compromise of the "Yoshida Doctrine" was driven by similar factors to the pre-war era: international circumstances and domestic politics.⁹³ This was a pragmatic policy that allowed Japan to adapt to starkly different

⁸⁹ Larson and Shevchenko, 'Status Seekers,' 69.

⁹⁰ Tsuneo Nishida, interview with the author, 17 March 2016.

⁹¹ Yoichi Funabashi, 'Japan and the New World Order,' *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 5 (1991): 59.

⁹² Akitoshi Miyashita, 'Where Do Norms Come From? Foundations of Japan's Postwar Pacifism,' in *Norms, Interests, and Power in Japanese Foreign Policy*, ed. Yoichiro Sato and Keiko Hirata (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁹³ The Yoshida Doctrine arose because domestic suspicion of the military ensured that when proponents of US alliance and limited rearmament won the debate on national policy, they had to make concessions to the public to ensure there would be no return to militarism. Thus as in Germany, Japan's leaders established new definitions of national identity: Prime Minister Yoshida's vision of Japan as a "merchant nation" (*shonin kokka*). See: Thomas U. Berger, 'Norms, Identity and National Security in Germany and

external circumstances.⁹⁴ Thus from 1868 to 1945, Japan applied its concern for hierarchy and prestige to a world of competing, expansionist states. After 1945, Japan's war history meant regionalism and regional leadership was problematic, so it became one of the few countries, as Funabashi puts it, "with truly global interests."⁹⁵ Japan adopted a peaceful constitution and accepted US security guarantees, while joining the United Nations and the many multilateral structures of the postwar world. As Richard Samuels puts it, "Japan has long been doing what all states do to reduce risk and maximise gain in an uncertain world—it has hedged."⁹⁶ This is a key way in which we reconcile a quasi-feudal culture of rank and standing before that date, with the postwar role as a cooperative and peaceful member of international society. It indicates that while the Yoshida Doctrine may have involved a more modest understanding of Japan's international status, it was pragmatic in terms of being the most achievable way for Japan to regain high status in its circumstances.

Put together, the factors listed in this section explain why international institutional roles, especially in the United Nations, were so important to Japanese status-seeking. We have seen that states are attracted to the benefits that come from status recognition, so they try to accumulate prestige that will pay off in the form of high status roles. However, the *way* an actor seeks status is not at all automatic. It is productive to refer to Vincent Pouliot's argument that a "profound sociality" drives interest in status, and indeed status is derived from the fact of sociality, rather than human nature as such.⁹⁷ As Pouliot argues, while states widely value status, there is no agreement about which

Japan,' in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (Columbia University Press, 1996), 331-36.

⁹⁴ See for example: Mike M. Mochizuki, 'Japan's Search for Strategy [National Security Strategy],' *International Security* 8 (1984); Michael J. Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Samuels, *Securing Japan*.

⁹⁵ Funabashi, 'Japan and the New World Order,' 58.

⁹⁶ Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 7.

⁹⁷ Pouliot, 'Setting Status in Stone,' 197.

status markers count, and so international actors must debate among how to distribute status' privileges. As a result, "the social value of given resources is neither immanent nor self-evident, but historically contingent and socially defined."⁹⁸ Consistent with the idea that prestige may be pursued along multiple axes, Pouliot's argument is especially relevant in the case of Japan. There, postwar pragmatism ensured that the country relinquished most international security roles, but instead focused its status ambitions on multilateral institutions, of which the United Nations Security Council was most prestigious of all.

It is important to recognise that even if Japanese status-seeking was bounded in its scope, it was still a key part of national ambitions and foreign policy. Seeking status through roles in international institutions was no less important a goal than the search by other states for status through, say, the exercise of military power. Aspects of this behaviour were referred to previously as "recognition games" that aim to promote beliefs about a state's status. A further way to conceptualise this is to argue, as Shogo Suzuki does, that Japan has behaved as a "frustrated great power."⁹⁹ The notion is that as a frustrated power, Japan believes it has not yet been granted full acceptance in international society, which means being treated as a social equal by others and being accorded the same constitutional privileges such as participation in high-status "clubs". Being perceived as a legitimate great power is both a means and an end, as this recognition enhances the state's structural power in practical ways. In other words, from an English School perspective, this means Japan wanted to be recognised as having full privileges in the institutions of international society. Suzuki's key argument is that while Japan may be "frustrated", it has not become a militaristic, revisionist state.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 195.

⁹⁹ Suzuki, 'Seeking 'Legitimate' Great Power Status.'

Instead, it is seeking recognition as a legitimate great power within the normative framework of international society.¹⁰⁰

The way that Japan's UN role involves the pursuit of recognition, rather than solely material benefits, is reflected in the beliefs of Japanese diplomats. They frequently argue that the case for their nation having a permanent seat is not so much what Japan might do with it, but that it is 'deserving' of the seat. Kiyotaka Akasaka, a former Japanese diplomat who also held a UN Under-Secretary-General post, notes that "It is not that Japan had a good idea of what to do with its new status. Japan wanted to join in the club."¹⁰¹ Kaoru Nemoto, another former diplomat who continues to serve in the UN, added: "The longing for Security Council permanent seat is more of a longing for acknowledgment, deriving from an inferiority complex, as a former 'enemy state'."¹⁰² One former UN Ambassador, Yuko Satoh, put it emphatically: "None of the P5 became permanent members thinking what they wanted to do. The important thing is to have Japan's views reflected in international politics - full stop!"¹⁰³ In a study that helps put many of these views in context, Robert Immerman writes of Japan's policies on the UN up to the early 1990s: "[Japanese elites] were not motivated by a desire to shape political or economic agendas, alter financing or budgets, facilitate the hiring of large numbers of Japanese as international civil servants, or promote specific national policies. Instead, they sought UN actions that appeared to confer greater status on Japan."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 47-49. Elsewhere I argue that legitimacy provides power as it reduces the cost to the state of winning the deference of other states

¹⁰¹ Kiyotaka Akasaka, interview with the author, 25 December 2015.

¹⁰² Kaoru Nemoto, interview with the author, 25 December 2015.

¹⁰³ Yukio Satoh, interview with the author, 15 March 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Immerman, 'Japan in the United Nations,' 186.

A combination of pragmatic, structurally driven policy combined with the outcomes of at times intense domestic political debates is a key source of the specific strategies that prevailed. The Japanese case is an example of a state choosing its status roles, and particularly the pursuit of status not through revisionism but through the forums of international institutions. This gave the UN a particularly important place in Japan's international thinking, which is why upheavals in the roles of both the UN and Japan's role within it were so sensitive in Japan after the end of the Cold War. First, however, it is necessary to provide a snapshot of Japan's actual pattern of activity during the "normal" phase of prestige-building.

The pattern of "normal" status-seeking

In the leadup to the case study, Japan's policies toward international institutions show all the hallmarks of "recognition games" – whereby a state engages in deliberate strategies to pursue social recognition to augment its standing in the international hierarchy.¹⁰⁵ This is to be expected when Japan was sensitive to perceptions of its international status, while institutional roles are a high-visibility mechanism to promote the country's standing. We have seen above the way that Japan greatly prized its positions in the OECD and the G7 — placing it at the 'top table' of global economic management. Japan's engagement with the UN, for example its pursuit of two-year elected terms on the Security Council (Japan had by 1990 taken more elected terms than any other UN member), was for similar ends. As with the international economic institutions, Tokyo saw UN roles as a fruitful avenue for accumulating prestige that would translate into desired status roles. However, a study of the pattern of Japan's behaviour reveals an important point. This status-seeking was always carried on within

¹⁰⁵ Suzuki, 'Seeking 'Legitimate' Great Power Status,' 46.

tightly defined boundaries. The level of resources devoted to advancing Japan in the UN – whether in terms of tangible international commitments, or the expenditure of diplomatic capital – were always constrained. “Normal” status-seeking indicated a conservative and incremental approach to raising Japan’s international standing.

Japan’s engagement with the UN in the 1960s and 1970s exemplifies the theme of caution. During these two decades, Japan began to receive support for a greater UN role. In the late 1960s, for example, ideas were floated for Japan and India sharing a rotating Security Council role, and there was a concept for Japan accepting semi-permanent UNSC status without a veto. By 1971, policymakers in Washington had reached a consensus that a permanent UNSC seat for Japan was in American interests, not least because it would “channel Japan’s nationalism and desire for recognition as a great power into constructive areas.”¹⁰⁶ While Japanese diplomats were at times impatient with Washington about a public declaration of support, when they did receive one, Tokyo agreed to keep its canvassing of support within the UN low-key.¹⁰⁷ Even after the PRC took over China’s permanent UNSC seat in October 1971, Japan’s response was surprisingly reserved. Speeches by Japanese Foreign Minister Fukuda simply criticised the Security Council for only having nuclear weapons states as permanent members, and suggested that “major economic or cultural powers” should also be added.¹⁰⁸ The subject was mentioned in joint communiques with the US at various points in the mid-1970s, and in a speech to the General Assembly by Japan’s then foreign minister Zentaro Kosaka in 1976.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ NSSM 122 of August 1971, cited in: Pan, *The United Nations*, 323.

¹⁰⁷ Liang Pan gives the example of an acrimonious meeting in April 1972 between a Japanese diplomat and US counterparts. Ibid., 326-27, 329.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 325.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 331; Fukushima, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, 86.

The 1980s saw the goal of a permanent seat firmly established within the Foreign Ministry agenda, and supported by Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, who engaged in a steady process of building Japan's position to progress a bid. These efforts included improving bilateral ties with the US, and playing an effective role as an elected Security Council member during 1987-88 on issues such as the Iran-Iraq war.¹¹⁰ In 1987, Nakasone suggested at a G7 meeting that Japan be considered as an "associate" permanent UNSC member, for the purpose of talks on the Iran-Iraq conflict, but this was not followed up, and none of Nakasone's successors wished to expend capital on it.¹¹¹

Instead, Nakasone's successor Noboru Takeshita made a key turn in foreign policy in 1988 in the form of his "International Cooperation Initiative", which indicated a distinct increase in attention paid to Japan's perceived responsibility for international security. This opened up scope for debate in the Diet connecting the goal of a UNSC permanent seat with increased contributions, potentially including military ones, to UN peacekeeping operations.¹¹² Japan also continued to increase the intensity of its UN engagement, for example securing the appointment in 1990 of Sadako Ogata as High Commissioner for Refugees and indicating greater financial support on refugee issues; playing a key role in redrafting the UNSC resolution helping conclude the Iran-Iraq conflict; contributing civilian observers to peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and Iran and Iraq; and also participating in UN activities in Namibia.¹¹³ It was indicative however of Japanese caution that even when this debate was opened up by Takeshita's

¹¹⁰ Drifte, 'Japan's Quest for a Permanent Seat on the Security Council,' 96. Drifte notes one Japanese diplomat's view that in 1984 the international environment was still "not yet right" for a bid, but the situation had improved by the end of Nakasone's term in 1987.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 97.

¹¹² Pan, *The United Nations*, 335-36.

¹¹³ Immerman, 'Japan in the United Nations,' 181-2, 188.

initiative, his successor, Kaifu, was reluctant to advance UNSC membership any further, lest it open too wide a domestic debate about peacekeeping obligations.¹¹⁴

Japan's activities regarding the UNSC up to 1990 appear to indicate the presence of a firm risk-return metric. As one scholar puts it: "While the Japanese like to stand high in accepted hierarchies and push aggressively in well-understood pursuits, they shrink from the unknown and the uncertain."¹¹⁵ One former Japanese Permanent Representative (Ambassador) to the UN in New York, Yoshio Hatano, notes that expansion of the council was being canvassed in the late 1980s. He says this could have gained the support of as many as 140 UN member states, and even if China and Russia had been lukewarm about it, they would not have exercised their vetos against it. However, Hatano argues, Japanese leaders failed to push for the expansion out of fear both of domestic reactions, and of antagonising Washington.¹¹⁶ Another former Permanent Representative, Yukio Satoh, agreed, saying: "If a resolution was passed by a two-thirds majority to include Japan as a candidate for permanent membership - it would be difficult for China not to accept it."¹¹⁷ What it took was the invasion of Kuwait and the Gulf War of 1990-91 to disrupt what had been the Foreign Ministry's "carefully calibrated plan for gradually and quietly expanding Japan's responsibilities for international peace and stability in a UN context."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Pan, *The United Nations*, 336.

¹¹⁵ Warren S. Hunsberger, 'Japan's Role: Past Present and Prospective,' in *Japan's Quest : The Search for International Recognition, Status, and Role*, ed. Warren S. Hunsberger (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 1997), 215.

¹¹⁶ Yoshio Hatano, interview with the author, 4 April 2016.

¹¹⁷ Yukio Satoh, interview with the author, 15 March 2016.

¹¹⁸ Immerman, 'Japan in the United Nations,' 188.

The Gulf War and Japan's status crisis

The 1990-91 Gulf War was immensely disruptive to political thinking in Japan. It demonstrated to Japanese leaders that whatever their beliefs about their nation's status, the rest of the world did not recognise it the same way. The ensuing sense of crisis has been described by Japanese scholars as "a great shock to many Japanese,"¹¹⁹ a "critical turning point in the history of Japan's postwar foreign policy,"¹²⁰ and a "crude post-Cold War awakening for Japan."¹²¹ In wider context, the Gulf conflict was bound to challenge Japan's international relations because it was part of the upheavals of the end of the Cold War that transformed relations between the major powers as well as the functioning of the United Nations. But it was the way that it constituted a blow to Japan's international status that makes it instructive as a case study.

The preceding section explained that during the postwar period, Japan had focused its prestige-building energy on international institutions, particularly the United Nations. The Gulf War represented a crisis for Japan's international status in several ways. It was unexpected, in its aftermath there was realisation that Japan's status had been harmed, and there was a belief that Japan needed to respond with urgency. It has also been described as a "functional" crisis, in the sense that it crystallised the situation and allowed new assessments of foreign policy risks and benefits.¹²² This section shows that the Gulf War status crisis was important because it revealed the ineffectiveness of

¹¹⁹ Yoshio Okawara, 'Japan's Global Responsibilities,' in *Japan's Emerging Global Role*, ed. Danny Unger and Paul Blackburn (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993).

¹²⁰ Akiyama, 'Japan's Failed Bid,' 277.

¹²¹ Yoichi Funabashi, 'Japan's Moment of Truth,' *Survival* 42, no. 4 (2000): 74.

¹²² I take the term "functional crisis" from Richard Samuels: Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 67-68.

previous prestige-earning efforts, while also allowing a revaluation of the importance of a Security Council seat as a foreign policy objective.

The Gulf War

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, beginning the conflict that lasted until February the next year, set up Japan's status crisis in two ways. First, it revealed the new importance of the Security Council in the immediate post-Cold War period, and second, it demonstrated the weakness of Japan's international relations. The invasion itself led to several condemnatory UNSC resolutions, but most importantly, in November 1990 the Security Council approved Resolution 678, invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter and authorising the use of force against a UN member state. In contrast to the pattern of the Cold War, the USSR – by then in its final months of existence – voted in favour, and China, preoccupied with post-Tiananmen sanctions, abstained. These developments helped thrust the Security Council to an unprecedented role of actual leadership in world politics. Among key developments, resolutions imposing sanctions against Iraq also involved the UNSC setting up a committee to monitor compliance. This was one of the first active governance roles for the Council itself, as opposed to delegating the task to the UN Secretary-General.¹²³ Likewise, postwar resolutions ensured that the UN body hunting weapons of mass destruction in Iraq would also report directly to the Security Council, keeping the process entirely out of the Secretary-General's orbit.¹²⁴ These measures demonstrated not only the increased public profile of the Security Council, but also its greater authority relative to the UN secretariat, and its new functional role in managing international security.

¹²³ Bosco, *Five to Rule Them All*, 157.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 163.

Even as the Security Council was being thrust to the forefront, Japan's initial response to the Gulf conflict hardly indicated a major challenge to its international relations. Although Japan was very quick to impose economic sanctions upon Iraq, its attempts to engage in security terms were aptly described as "slow and spasmodic".¹²⁵ On one front, figures in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, led by party Secretary-General Ozawa Ichiro, wanted to despatch the Self-Defense Force to the Middle East as part of the UN sanctioned force. They argued that this would be legal as it would form part of Japan's responsibilities to the international community. But Prime Minister Kaifu allowed himself to be bound by the advice of the Cabinet Legislative Bureau – the bureaucratic interpreters and guardians of the constitution's pacifist Article 9 – telling Ozawa directly that "the CLB director-general has told me that this is 'constitutionally impossible.'"¹²⁶ Instead, a special session of the Diet was finally convened on 12 October 1990, a full two months after the crisis began, and the Foreign Ministry persuaded a reluctant Kaifu to sponsor a United Nations Peace Cooperation Bill (UNPCB). This legislation was hastily cobbled together by a Foreign Ministry task force, mainly from the United Nations Bureau, and lacked the full support of the Japanese Defence Agency, the Self-Defence Force, and even the senior leadership of the Foreign Ministry and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.¹²⁷ After what could fairly be described as a "sterile debate" over the Bill's constitutionality, it was withdrawn from the Diet in November 1990.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Takashi Inoguchi, 'Japan's Response to the Gulf Crisis: An Analytic Overview,' *Journal of Japanese Studies* 17, no. 2 (1991): 258.

¹²⁶ Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 66.

¹²⁷ Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, 202-03.

¹²⁸ The words of Kenichi Ito, a former president of the Japan Forum on International Relations. Kenichi Ito, 'The Japanese State of Mind: Deliberations on the Gulf Crisis,' *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 17, no. 2 (1991): 278.

The result of the legislative fiasco was that the Kaifu government acquiesced entirely to the CLB's highly exacting interpretation of Article 9. On the one hand, Japan contributed \$13 billion, raised from a special tax, to the US-led coalition's war costs. Yet this appeared to the world as a glaring contrast to Japan's inability to contribute to security efforts. In the end, as fighting raged in January-February 1991, Japan was not even able to send transport aircraft to the Gulf to collect refugees. A deployment of Japanese minesweepers to the region only took place after the cessation of hostilities, and had to be passed off as a "maritime safety" matter rather than a security deployment.¹²⁹ As Richard Samuels puts it, "it was not pretty watching the Japanese government fail miserably in its first test of the so-called New World Order."¹³⁰

The aftermath of the Gulf War

The upshot of the Gulf War was that Japan had provided an immense financial contribution, yet sent no defence assets until after the conflict was over, and had received no say in the deliberations of the Security Council. Moreover, the contradiction between the great sum involved, and Tokyo's decisions to place no personnel in harm's way, only served to convince observers that Japan engaged in 'chequebook diplomacy'.¹³¹ Adding to the embarrassment, Japan was conspicuously omitted from a full-page advertisement of thanks placed by Kuwait in the *New York Times* after the war. To rub salt into the wound, Kuwait also established a monument that flew the flags of every country that contributed troops to the US-led coalition; Japan was not represented.¹³² There was the broad view that "Japan's ambitions in international

¹²⁹ Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 66.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, 202.

¹³² Richard D. Leitch, Akira Katō, and Martin E. Weinstein, *Japan's Role in the Post-Cold War World* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1995), 45.

politics lay very much in ruins after the Gulf War,”¹³³ and this had a significant impact on Japan’s prestige at the elite, public and international levels.

At the elite level, “Japanese political circles were crestfallen” by the Kuwaiti snub,¹³⁴ which is described by former UN Ambassador Hatano as “a bitter experience.”¹³⁵ The Japanese attitude to the Council had been typified by one diplomat who was quoted saying: “The UN question is basically a question of money. We’ll be raising our contribution soon from 12.4 per cent to 15 percent — and that should give us a right of entry.”¹³⁶ The Gulf War undercut this belief, demonstrating that financial contributions were not an effective way of showing commitment.¹³⁷ In his *Blueprint for a New Japan* published after the war, Ozawa described the Gulf Crisis as “a painful lesson for Japan.” He said those in Japan who felt that the country had financially propped up an economically ailing United States were mistaken, as the request for financial support was only “fourth or fifth” in the list of US requests of Japan. The influential LDP heavyweight wrote:

It was Japan that, unable to deploy even a single person to the Gulf region, instead sought to get by simply by writing checks. Japan chose to become a mere dispenser of cash... But no matter how much money Japan spent, the respect of its partners would not be forthcoming.¹³⁸

Writing that Japan had psychologically distanced itself from the American definition of an ally, Ozawa declared that: “As a nation that seeks to preserve its strong alliance with the United States, Japan cannot but acknowledge that we suffered a serious ‘defeat’ in the Persian Gulf War.”¹³⁹

¹³³ Bert Edström, ‘The Yoshida Doctrine and the Unipolar World,’ *Japan Forum* 16, no. 1 (2004): 80.

¹³⁴ Akiyama, ‘Japan’s Failed Bid,’ 277.

¹³⁵ Yoshio Hatano, interview with the author, 4 April 2016.

¹³⁶ Drifte, *Japan’s Foreign Policy in the 1990s*, 132.

¹³⁷ Nobumasa Akiyama, , interview with the author, 17 March 2016.

¹³⁸ Ozawa and Gower, *Blueprint for a New Japan*, 2, 38.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

The hurt from the experience was also felt among the broad public. Naoko Sajima notes that “in Japan there was a widespread perception that the country’s prestige had suffered,”¹⁴⁰ while Richard Samuels cites ubiquitous calls for “a new grand strategy ‘based on respect’.”¹⁴¹ The impact on the public mind suggests a reversal in perceptions of Japan’s international status, undoing many years of steady prestige-building. There was the belief that “never again should Japan’s honour be so tarnished,”¹⁴² and this was reflected in arguments that a UNSC seat was more vital than ever. As the prominent Japanese journalist Hiroshi Fujita wrote in 1995, the country needed will and perseverance to secure the UNSC seat, and “if Japan fails, there will be nothing for it to do but resign itself to being a second-rate country with no confidence either in its ability or its way of life.”¹⁴³

The implications were also not missed by the US Ambassador to Tokyo at the time, Michael Armacost, who cabled Washington in 1991: “A large gap was revealed between Japan’s desire for recognition as a great power and its willingness and ability to assume these risks and responsibilities.... For all its economic prowess, Japan is not in the great power league...”¹⁴⁴ A particular concern was that the Gulf War had revealed Japan’s weakness in terms of engaging with the Security Council or even having effective knowledge of the Council’s deliberations.¹⁴⁵ This was now of vital importance since the body’s new-found cooperation was letting it make decisions of great import to Japan. Former Permanent Representative Nishida said: “If you’re not a

¹⁴⁰ Naoko Sajima, 'Japan: Strategic Culture at a Crossroads,' in *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region*, ed. Ken Booth and Russell Troad (Macmillan, 1999), 85.

¹⁴¹ Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 187.

¹⁴² Mike M. Mochizuki, 'Japan's Changing International Role,' in *Japan in International Politics: The Foreign Policies of an Adaptive State*, ed. Thomas U. Berger, Mike Mochizuki, and Jitsuo Tsuchiyama (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), 5.

¹⁴³ Hiroshi Fujita, 'UN Reform and Japan's Permanent Security Council Seat,' *Japan Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (1995): 442.

¹⁴⁴ United States. Department of State, "Cable Tokyo 04532: The Gulf War: Impact on Japan and US-Japan Relations," (1991).

¹⁴⁵ Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, 203.

permanent member you'll never be consulted on the core issues... A non-permanent member of the Security Council is nothing, frankly speaking. When you're a permanent member you notice the difference."¹⁴⁶ As a result, Japan was now poised to take serious action to rectify its ability to engage in international security, and in turn to take on a greater role in the Security Council itself.

Enhanced status-seeking: the bid for the Security Council seat

Japan's actions in relation to the Security Council from 1991 until 1994 show a pattern of more intensive status-seeking in response to the crisis of the Gulf War. In undertaking actions that would not have occurred without the crisis, it was distinctive that, compared with the Japan's postwar record of caution and gradualism in its international relations, Japan's post-1991 UNSC campaigning was "unusually and uncharacteristically provocative."¹⁴⁷ This reflects the way that the status crisis worked. It was, as Richard Samuels describes it, a "functional" crisis, which drove home to policymakers and the public truths about the costs of international security, and in that way "catalysed debate on fundamental issues about national security and the U.S. alliance."¹⁴⁸ Similarly, Drifte describes it as "a catalyst in forging a consensus among leading diplomats and the political leadership at the time on pursuing the candidature for permanent Security Council membership more forcefully."¹⁴⁹ In response, Japan's actions took two principal directions: domestic political action to allow participation in

¹⁴⁶ Tsuneo Nishida, interview with the author, 17 March 2016.

¹⁴⁷ Akiyama, 'Japan's Failed Bid,' 293.

¹⁴⁸ Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 67-68.

¹⁴⁹ Drifte, *Japan's Quest*, 65.

UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKO), and diplomatic efforts to reform the Security Council.

Domestic efforts and new agendas

The crucial groundwork for seeking a seat was a much more intense level of domestic political work to strengthen Japan's presence in the sphere of international security. At the centre of this was legislation at last allowing Japan to participate in UNPKO. In contrast to the failure of the Peace Cooperation Bill in autumn 1990, a new International Peace Cooperation Law was introduced the following year with considerably greater care. While any measure allowing the SDF to deploy overseas remained intensely sensitive, this time the LDP government carefully brought centrists on board with reassuring rhetoric and safeguards such as keeping deployments small, subject to Diet approval, and only to locations where a cease-fire was already in effect.¹⁵⁰ While the new Law still faced intense Diet debate, it was successfully enacted in August 1992. Tokyo was keen to make a test case for the legislation,¹⁵¹ and in September 1992 a 600-strong force was despatched to join the newly created UN peacekeeping operation in Cambodia.

The Peace Cooperation Law was important to building Japanese credentials for a greater UNSC role, but it also represented a wider domestic agenda. This was the belief among Japanese elites that high-profile reforms in foreign policy would in turn mobilise domestic support for Japan taking a higher-status international role. This thinking was summarised in 1994 by Japan's then UN Permanent Representative, Hisashi Owada,

¹⁵⁰ Thomas U. Berger, 'From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-Militarism,' *International Security* 17, no. 4 (1993): 143.

¹⁵¹ Warren S. Hunsberger and Richard B. Finn, *Japan's Quest: The Search for International Recognition, Status, and Role* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 99.

who noted in a speech that UNSC permanent membership was important because Japan had to become more internationally engaged than previously. He explained that the permanent UNSC role would be a mechanism for this, because: “Once you are given the place where you can engage yourself, there will be a much greater degree of public support to what the government can do and there will be much more interest in the country as a whole to get engaged,” he said.¹⁵² The significance of this view was confirmed by former UN Ambassador Satoh, who concurred that increased UN responsibilities would mobilise the Japanese public’s enthusiasm for other international commitments. “The security council seat can be a source of new creative thinking, and we may be able to translate this into political power, at least to expand our perspectives.”¹⁵³

The crisis that resulted from Japan’s exclusion from UNSC deliberations during the Gulf conflict had an interesting outcome in terms of prestige-building activity. A clear outcome was that the peacekeeping law, previously stymied by domestic opposition, was reintroduced after the crisis with greater effort and reduced opposition. Perhaps more interestingly, the crisis revised in the minds of policymakers the significance of the high-status UNSC role. This then led to redoubled enthusiasm for the role as elites swung around to the view that the position could have valuable domestic political benefits. In short, it would help build what Akiyama Nobumasa calls a “new national

¹⁵² ‘Owada Explains Why Japan Wants UNSC Permanent Seat,’ *Yomiuri Shimbun/The Japan News*, 7 December 1994.

¹⁵³ Yukio Satoh, interview with the author, 15 March 2016.

narrative” that would provide impetus for a wide-ranging reconfiguration of Japan’s domestic institutions.¹⁵⁴

Diplomatic campaigning

Diplomatic activity intensified after the passage of the International Peace Cooperation Law. In September 1991, the Non-Aligned Movement agreed on an increase in the size of the Security Council, and at the same time, several countries tabled a resolution in the UN on the subject.¹⁵⁵ In January 1992, Prime Minister Miyazawa told the Security Council – Japan held an elected seat at the time – that the body had to reconsider its membership.¹⁵⁶ In December 1992, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to formally begin discussions about reform of both the Assembly and the Security Council. A year later, a working group was set up to consider Security Council membership, and indeed in 1993 UNSC activity peaked with a record 93 resolutions passed.¹⁵⁷ Meanwhile, with the domestic groundwork laid, and after considerable pressure from the UN Division of the Foreign Ministry, in September 1992 Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe addressed the UN General Assembly. This marked the first official reference (at least at ministerial level) to Japan’s interest in a UNSC permanent seat. This was followed by a speech by Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi to the same General Assembly, stating a similar wish for UN reform. A year later, Miyazawa’s successor Morohiro Hosokawa formally said that Japan intended to play a greater role

¹⁵⁴ Akiyama, 'Japan's Failed Bid,' 275.

¹⁵⁵ Drifte, 'Japan's Quest for a Permanent Seat on the Security Council,' 98.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Akiyama, 'Japan's Failed Bid,' 279-80.

in the Security Council. This was as close to a formal launch of a campaign as Japan's diplomatic language would allow.¹⁵⁸

Japan's UNSC diplomacy, previously indirect and reserved, became more pointed after the Gulf crisis. At the January 1992 special Security Council summit in New York, Prime Minister Miyazawa said membership of the council must be "more reflective of the realities of the new era",¹⁵⁹ while his press secretary, Masamichi Hanabusa, said Japan expected to gain a permanent UNSC seat by 1995, or else it would begin to resent "taxation without representation...Some tea party may occur somewhere."¹⁶⁰ Equally, Ambassador Yoshio Hatano, Japan's permanent representative to the UN, bluntly calling for Japan to receive a permanent seat within five years.¹⁶¹ Similarly, during the 1991 General Assembly session, foreign minister Nakayama referred to the Enemy States Clauses as "utterly inappropriate historical relics which should be promptly deleted."¹⁶² This rhetoric was enough, in the recollection of US Ambassador to Tokyo, Michael Armacost, to make the American UN delegation "nervous" and attract the attention of Washington decision-makers. The US was forced to urge Japan to limit calls for UN reform to its own case for a higher-profile role, lest it open the floodgates to "unrestrained logrolling" by aspirants to permanent UNSC seats.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 280.

¹⁵⁹ *Statement by Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa at the United Nations Security Council Meeting at the Level of Heads of State and Government*, 31 January 1991. Available at: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1992/1992-appendix-2.htm#\(3\)%20Statement](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1992/1992-appendix-2.htm#(3)%20Statement)

¹⁶⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, 1 February 1992, p.7.

¹⁶¹ Drifte, *Japan's Foreign Policy in the 1990s*, 133.

¹⁶² Pan, *The United Nations*, 338.

¹⁶³ Michael H. Armacost, *Friends or Rivals? : The Insider's Account of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 159-60.

The bid lost momentum after Miyazawa was replaced in August 1993 by Hosokawa, who served less than a year at the top of a disjointed eight-party coalition. In an interview Nobumasa Akiyama pointed out that despite Japan's strong diplomatic push for the Council seat, Hosokawa was not interested in it, and his advisers preferred to work on other priorities such as bilateral relations with Seoul and Beijing.¹⁶⁴ As a result, although the Foreign Ministry tried hard to strengthen his text, Hosokawa's September 1993 speech to the General Assembly referred only to a "general need" to expand the Council's membership, and that "Japan intends to participate constructively in the discussion on Security Council reform."¹⁶⁵ Hosokawa later said that while Japan was ready to accept a UNSC seat, "We will not press our way through. We will not conduct a campaign."¹⁶⁶

One great disappointment for Japan must surely be that, considering the lack of UN reform to the present, around 1992 there was a window of opportunity to expand the Security Council. With Japan then contributing nearly 17 per cent of the UN's budget, more than the combined contribution of the four permanent UNSC members other than the United States, the UN needed Japanese support for almost any new initiative, including peacekeeping missions.¹⁶⁷ Only a single veto was cast on the Council between 1990 and 1993, and Japanese diplomats felt neither China nor Russia would have cast one against Japan, had its UNSC bid been put to the General Assembly and received

¹⁶⁴ Nobumasa Akiyama, interview with the author, 17 March 2016.

¹⁶⁵ *Address By Mr. Morihiro Hosokawa, Prime Minister Of Japan*, 48th session of the United Nations General Assembly, 28 September 1993, A/48/PV.4.

¹⁶⁶ *New York Times*, 28 September 1993, p. A16.

¹⁶⁷ Tadokoro, 'A Japanese View on Restructuring the Security Council,' 129.

strong endorsement.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, in April 1992 US officials told their Japanese counterparts: “If it was just a question of adding Japan and increasing Council size to 16... ‘we could do it tomorrow’.”¹⁶⁹ To be sure, some scholarly observers are more sceptical about this than former Japanese diplomats.¹⁷⁰ However it was clear that as Japan was preoccupied in 1992 with passing the new Peace Cooperation Law, it missed its best opportunity.¹⁷¹ Akiyama told the author that discussion of Japan’s UN role was still immature in the 1990s and had to fight with emerging domestic concerns such as poor economic growth. “There was scope for success, but Japan lacked a political strategy and foundations [for the campaign] at home,” Akiyama said.¹⁷² It is possible that if Japan had moved earlier to bring its peacekeeping activities in line with its role as a major world economy and institutional actor, and if crucial domestic debates had also occurred earlier, then Japan may have been well placed to seize the opportunity that arose in the UN in the early 1990s. But no such preparations had been made, precisely because Japan faced no crisis to trigger the necessary action.

Notes on findings

This case study has shown a broad pattern of activity that is consistent with the overall hypothesis of this thesis. We have seen a relatively stable process of normal status-

¹⁶⁸ Yukio Satoh, interview with the author, 15 March 2016. Satoh said a two-thirds majority in the Assembly would have been enough to make a veto untenable.

¹⁶⁹ Assistant Secretary of State John R. Bolton to Japanese Foreign Ministry officials, quoted in cable 1992STATE144980 of 7 May 1992.

¹⁷⁰ For example, the UNU’s von Einsiedel says a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly would have been difficult, because there was little reason for members to hand the veto power to another UNSC permanent member. He also notes that Japan’s financial contributions were inflated at the time by the high value of the yen. Sebastian von Einsiedel, interview with the author, 4 April 2016.

¹⁷¹ Adding to this, the incumbent UNSC permanent members used a special summit at the start of 1992 to transfer the Soviet Union’s permanent seat to the Russian Federation. This was widely seen as a pre-emptive move to ensure the door was not opened to wider reform. Bourantonis, *The History and Politics of UN Security Council Reform*, 43.

¹⁷² Nobumasa Akiyama, interview with the author, 17 March 2016.

seeking; a status crisis that was perceived as a serious threat to key values; and in response, an ensuing phase of enhanced prestige-building. Having said this, interesting findings were revealed in the detail of this pattern of activity. The first of these has to do with the “functional” aspects of the status crisis. While a crisis can be expected to reveal information and force fresh valuations, it is interesting to see that this can cut both ways. In this instance, the UNSC seat was shown to be more valuable than previously expected, but it also carried higher risks and responsibilities than had been previously considered. A separate finding is that the case study highlights the importance of domestic politics in any response to a status crisis. As noted below, this empirical example only highlights that there may be no uniform response by a state to an issue.

In terms of valuations, the Gulf conflict served as a catalyst to reveal the new role of the Security Council as a major centre of world politics. It caused Japanese decision-makers to also reassess the benefits of holding a seat. Former Deputy Permanent Representative Shinichi Kitaoka, who has remained close to the Abe government and moved on to head Japan’s international cooperation agency JICA, is forthcoming about the attractions as well as the burdens. He said by holding a seat, other countries would be forced to consult with Japan, Japan would have a say in the precedence and procedures of the Council (which are guarded by the P5), and the veto would be valuable even if it was not exercised, as it could be traded for concessions in the Council. On the other hand, Japan would have to face up to greater international responsibility: “We would have to make decisions, whether good or bad, while Japan has been accustomed to being hidden behind the US. Instead, we would have to show our opinion.”¹⁷³ At the time, this was the view of Prime Minister Hosokawa’s policy advisor, Shusei Tanaka. Tanaka identified that the considerable increase in the UNSC’s functions and effective power

¹⁷³ Shinichi Kitaoka, interview with the author, 15 March 2016.

thanks to the end of the Cold War also meant greater responsibilities, for which the Japanese public was unprepared. He wrote at the time: “Japan will become a laughing stock of the world when it becomes a permanent SC member but the Japanese public refuse to shoulder the responsibility that the new position entails.”¹⁷⁴ In this way, the “functional” crisis of the Gulf War demonstrated the UNSC’s attractions, which appealed to the foreign policy establishment, but also its burdens, which sparked anxiety among politicians and their advisers.

This divide between the responses of diplomats and politicians highlights the way national responses to status concerns are shaped by domestic political considerations. The study shows that the serious status concerns exposed by the Gulf War were met by equally strong motivations for action among key constituencies in Japan. Part of the information revealed by the crisis was that MOFA was exposed as having driven entirely the wrong policy approach during the conflict. Thus the Ministry was the most deeply affected part of the government and the most motivated force for change. MOFA threw all efforts into mounting a strong UNSC bid, and its efforts continued well after 1993. At the same time, the Ministry was left isolated because the remainder of the Japanese political system was not ready for the bid. Tanaka’s advice to Hosokawa can be understood in this context. It demonstrated that even when it is clear that a state has suffered a serious loss of status, we must look inside the system of domestic politics to identify the constituencies that will drive new prestige-building to rectify the situation.

¹⁷⁴ Yoshio Okubo, ‘Hosokawa Tones Down UNSC Bid,’ *Yomiuri Shimbun/The Japan News*, 29 September 1993.

Next steps

Although Japan's UNSC bid has a substantial literature, the case analysis aimed to address the outstanding puzzle around the specific roles that status played in this episode. The key findings are that, first, that prestige-building in the pre-Gulf War period was cautious and balanced the attractions of a UNSC seat with both international and domestic sensitivities. This pattern of activity was disrupted by the Gulf War, and the evidence (including the recollections of Japanese diplomats) was that the effects on Japan's status were particularly unexpected and humbling. This crisis delivered new information about the value of a UNSC seat and the need for Japan to assert its role there. It was then possible to observe a strong pattern of Japanese activity that was more assertive, indeed provocative, than before the Gulf conflict, and willing to confront the sensibilities of both allies in Washington and the domestic audience. It indicates that this case supports the idea of a three-phased pattern of status-seeking behaviour, with decision-makers readily perceiving the onset of a status crisis, and moving rapidly to adjust policies in response.

5. CHINA AND THE COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY, 1996

SECTION A: EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

Introducing the case

On 24 September 1996, China became the second signatory to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The decision has attracted the attention of scholars because, while China had up to that point engaged in arms control commitments such as the Outer Space Treaty, the Seabed Arms Control Treaty, and the Antarctic Treaty, the CTBT marked the first time China agreed multilaterally to effectively limit its weapon capabilities.¹ It remains puzzling that while the United States and Russia had together tested more than 1,700 nuclear devices, China agreed to halt its program after conducting only 45 successful tests. It has made this case one where scholars of IR have intently searched for the trade-offs that made the treaty desirable. To quote the prominent Chinese arms control expert Li Bin on the matter: “Always when you join a treaty you gain something and you pay a price.”² What did China gain from signing this treaty? This case has been selected because the existing scholarship has frequently suggested that the attraction, in the eyes of decision-makers in Beijing, was higher international status for China. The opportunity here is to take this puzzling event and examine how changing perceptions of status may have influenced China’s decisions.

¹ Bates Gill, 'Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: The Dynamics of Chinese Nonproliferation and Arms Control Policy-Making in an Era of Reform,' in *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, ed. David M. Lampton (Stanford University Press, 2001), 261.

² Li Bin, interview with the author, 22 March 2016.

The balance of evidence is that China paid a cost in national security terms for signing the CTBT. The issue, as Alastair Iain Johnston described it while the CTBT negotiations were still underway, was whether China's concerns about its image were a factor in this. Up to that point, China had been reluctant to engage in multilateral arms control agreements, knowing that they would be effective in constraining its military capabilities:

Yet China is involved in these negotiations, even though there is no external material coercion compelling its participation... So there must be some additional factor that is altering the cost-benefit analysis, a factor that compels China to participate in a process the end point of which it would prefer to avoid. This variable appears to be international image.³

The first section of this chapter sets out the existing explanations in more detail. These explanations include technical developments meaning the CTBT posed only a minimal impediment to China's nuclear weapons program; that the treaty was costly, but the choice to sign it was highly instrumental because China's rivals would pay even greater costs; explanations drawing from both instrumental and constructivist lines of thought about China's valuation of its international image; and that the process of international engagement had socialised Chinese decision-makers into adopting arms control norms. Most of these explanations run a gamut of debates over whether Chinese attitudes on the issue were a case of ulterior reassurance, or an internalised transformation of values: the so-called "adaptation versus learning" debate.⁴

This chapter takes into account the existing explanations, but argues that multiple causes need to be considered in order to better explain the decision to sign a costly treaty, and indeed the timing of that decision. Like the other case studies in this thesis, this chapter shows that a contributing factor was an unfavourable international

³ Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Prospects for Chinese Nuclear Force Modernization: Limited Deterrence Versus Multilateral Arms Control,' *The China Quarterly* 146, no. 146 (1996): 575-76.

⁴ See: Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Learning Versus Adaptation: Explaining Change in Chinese Arms Control Policy in the 1980s and 1990s,' *The China Journal* 35, no. 35 (1996).

environment. These contexts appear to make status-related concerns more acute and more likely to play a causal role in changing policy outcomes. In this case study, a contributing factor to China's decision was its international isolation after the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989. This put serious pressure on China's international status until at least the signing of the CTBT in 1996. The intensity of this status crisis varied over these years, but a contribution to the signing decision was likely to have been an upsurge in Chinese concern about the "China threat" issue. This made the post-Tiananmen status crisis particularly acute over the same two years that the treaty was being negotiated, and combined with pressure on China about its adherence to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. These provide a way to set out a sequence of events in which changing Chinese self-perceptions of status help explain why it signed the test-ban treaty.

Outline of events

This timeline sets out a narrow slice of China's international relations from about 1989 to 1996, when the CTBT was signed. It includes only events that were relevant to debates about China's international status, and the process of arms control treaty-making. The purpose of this section is to put in order the events that form part of the argument in the next section that the signing of the CTBT was linked to a particular pattern of Chinese status-seeking.

The period from 1989 to 1996 was marked by sharp swings in China's perceptions of its security, standing, and overall relations with the outside world. These shifts in Chinese self-perceptions were dominated by the state of relations with Washington, with key

regional actors such as Japan, and especially during this period, across the Taiwan Strait. Sino-American relations were particularly cold immediately after the crackdown on student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989. Diplomatic efforts in late 1989 and early 1990 attempted to trade concessions, but for the most part ran into misunderstanding. While the George H.W. Bush administration intended to maintain strategically pragmatic relations with Beijing, and vetoed the US Congress' most contentious post-Tiananmen legislation, the greater context of the end of the Cold War made restoring relations difficult. Leaders in Beijing were deeply shocked by the fall of European communism and the collapse of the USSR lost them a potential partner and left China isolated as a communist regime.⁵ At the same time, Beijing was dismayed and placed on the defensive by the demonstration of US military superiority in the 1991 Gulf War.⁶

An initial reaction to this situation was Deng Xiaoping's early 1992 "southern tour" of special economic zones in Guangdong Province, which as Robert Suettinger puts it, "legitimized and expanded a course of economic reform that led to China's emergence as one of the world's fastest-growing and fastest-changing economies."⁷ In retrospect, the period is also characterised by the famous 28-character statement attributed to Deng that China should "bide its time" and "maintain a low profile."⁸

⁵ Avery Goldstein, 'An Emerging China's Emerging Grand Strategy: A Neo-Bismarckian Turn?,' in *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, ed. G John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno (Columbia University Press, 2003), 65.

⁶ Robert Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen : The Politics of U.S.-China Relations, 1989-2000* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 103-04, 116.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁸ The statement is attributed to a 4 September 1989 speech, but David Shambaugh notes that there is no record of Deng having uttered the famous phrase. He suggests it may have been attributed to Deng by Jiang Zemin in 1998. See: David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 19.

Subsequent efforts to restore China's external standing began with difficulty. From 1993-94, US-China relations were bedevilled by the Clinton administration's linkage of China's human rights record with Most Favored Nation (MFN) trading status. In the second half of 1993, there was also a series of disputes between Beijing and Washington. These included threats of sanctions against China due to reported missile transfers to Pakistan; US efforts to intercept suspected chemical weapon precursors to Iran; apparent US opposition to Beijing hosting the 2000 Olympics (which were awarded to Sydney instead); and tensions over China's October 1993 underground nuclear test, which came so soon after President Clinton's July call for a ban on nuclear tests.⁹

On the other hand, during 1993 China's international position improved on several fronts. In that year, China and Taiwan opened unofficial talks and established a framework for cooperation, and in 1994 Clinton ended annual trade "linkage", which had bedevilled the bilateral relationship with Washington. China also boosted efforts to improve relations with its neighbours, including dialogue over border disputes, normalisation of bilateral relationships, and efforts to address intractable historical differences.¹⁰

It was also during this time that China made significant engagement with multilateral arms control. In the early years after its first detonation of a nuclear device in 1964, China had been defensive and hostile toward nuclear arms control and nonproliferation. While it had stated that it would not export nuclear weapons, Beijing considered the Limited Test-Ban Treaty to be targeted against it, while seeing the nuclear Non-

⁹ David M. Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams : Managing U.S.-China Relations, 1989-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 42.

¹⁰ Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford Univ Pr, 2005), 47.

Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as discriminatory and hypocritical. As late as 1978, official Chinese media could call the NPT “a conspiracy concocted by the USSR and the US to maintain their nuclear monopoly.”¹¹ During the 1980s and early 1990s, however, China joined a succession of nuclear non-proliferation institutions, including the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1984, the voluntary safeguards agreement in 1988, and acceding to the NPT review and extension process in 1992.¹² The signing of the CTBT sits near to the culmination of that two-decade long period of increasing Chinese engagement with the international non-proliferation regime.

In contrast to the seeming advances of 1992-94, China’s international position took a turn for the worse in 1995-96. China had stepped up its engagement in multilateral institutions and enjoyed more normal bilateral relations with Washington, but this was offset by a new swing toward Chinese assertiveness. This included forceful claims in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait crisis from late 1995, which sparked a rapid reaction from an international community. By the time of the case study, China was facing serious pressure due to these international disputes.

China first expressed its willingness to participate in CTBT negotiations in September 1993, and dropped conditions such as attaching the treaty to complete elimination of nuclear weapons.¹³ China was not, however, keen to conclude the treaty too quickly, as it was finalising a series of nuclear tests aimed at narrowing the gap with the other declared nuclear powers, and producing smaller warheads for more survivable systems.¹⁴ Only in October 1993, after China had conducted its 39th test, did Beijing

¹¹ Mingquan Zhu, ‘The Evolution of China’s Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy,’ *The Nonproliferation Review* 4, no. 2 (1997): 43.

¹² *Ibid.*, 45.

¹³ Banning N. Garrett and Bonnie S. Glaser, ‘Chinese Perspectives on Nuclear Arms Control,’ *International Security* 20 (1996): 54.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

announce full support for the CTBT.¹⁵ China increased its pace of testing from 1994-96 (conducting an unprecedented six tests in just over two years). A consideration was that Chinese leaders had made an in-principle decision to sign the treaty in late 1995, well before the outcome of the final testing series was available. A decision to adhere to the moratorium on testing was apparently made in April 1996, four months before the end of the tests.¹⁶

Existing explanations

The key purpose for reviewing the literature on China and the CTBT is to investigate the existing explanations, especially those that are concerned about China's image or status. The first step is to examine what scholars have said about the costliness of the treaty. After this, the principal explanations debated in the literature include instrumental security explanations, concerns about China's image, and the possibility of socialisation. To the extent that these explanations highlight prestige and status as a factor in the decision, they are a useful way of identifying whether this case was one where status was a "most likely" driver of causal outcomes. This review of explanations also highlights the gaps that remain in explaining how concerns about image and status came to be a causal factor in the decision, and how they may have influenced the timing of the decision.

¹⁵ Gill, 'Two Steps Forward, One Step Back.'

¹⁶ Michael D. Swaine and Alastair Iain Johnston, 'China and Arms Control Institutions,' in *China Joins the World: Progress and Prospects*, ed. Elizabeth Economy and Michel Oksenberg (New York, Washington: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999), 108.

For this case study, the decision to sign the CTBT culminated a decade and a half of steadily intensifying Chinese involvement with international nonproliferation and arms control institutions. The literature shows that this involvement sits in the context of wider policies of caution and restraint alongside growing engagement with the outside world after 1979. However, the CTBT also marks a qualitative change in the form of China joining a costly multilateral treaty, which requires further investigation.

Before 1979, China had condemned US-Soviet strategic arms limitation talks as “sham disarmament” intended to cover-up for the superpower arms race.¹⁷ Alastair Iain Johnston describes Chinese strategic policy as the drive for “a rich state and strong army,” and Beijing shunned arms control agreements that would constrain Chinese capabilities.¹⁸ By contrast, the post-1979 period saw Beijing greatly increase its involvement in multilateral institutions.¹⁹ This conformed to Deng’s policy that “development is the absolute principle,” and that “in everything it does, the military should subordinate itself to the bigger picture of national development.”²⁰ As a result, the 1980s saw Beijing set aside its earlier antagonism towards arms control; China started to participate in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), and let itself free ride on arms control agreements that limited the arsenals of other powers.²¹ In 1982, China made its “three halts and one reduction” proposal, in 1986 it announced its de facto acceptance of the Partial Test-Ban Treaty, and from the same year China worked with

¹⁷ Garrett and Glaser, ‘Chinese Perspectives on Nuclear Arms Control,’ 47.

¹⁸ Johnston, ‘Learning Versus Adaptation,’ 33-34.

¹⁹ See: David Shambaugh, ‘China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order,’ *International Security* 29, no. 3 (2004-05).

²⁰ Fan Jishe, ‘Nuclear Nonproliferation: China’s Thinking and Practices,’ in *Understanding Chinese Nuclear Thinking*, ed. Li Bin and Tong Zhao (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016), 201.

²¹ Garrett and Glaser, ‘Chinese Perspectives on Nuclear Arms Control,’ 47; Johnston, ‘Learning Versus Adaptation,’ 34.

the CD towards in-principle acceptance of a comprehensive test ban.²² Meanwhile, China joined the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1984, agreed to make civil facilities subject to IAEA safeguards from 1985, signed the voluntary safeguards agreement in 1988, and increased reporting to the IAEA from 1991-93.²³ By the start of the 1990s, China had engaged with a wide range of arms control processes, such as acceding to treaties on non-nuclear weapons, making unilateral commitments (including to no-first-use), training a cadre of arms controls experts via the CD, and issuing statements in support of other agreements, such as the START treaties.²⁴

Out of all China's arms control engagement prior to 1996, the most significant was its decision to sign the NPT. While we have seen that China disparaged that treaty for many years after it was opened for signing in 1968, Beijing made a significant change of direction in 1990 as it turned to support the treaty, and it formally acceded to the treaty in March 1992. As scholars noted at the time, one of the motivations was that it "enabled China to gain further legitimacy and status as a great power while pursuing various diplomatic, economic, and strategic interests."²⁵ Key amongst this was that as China had conducted a nuclear test prior to the NPT's 1967 cut-off date, joining the treaty formalised China's status as an internationally recognised nuclear weapons state.²⁶ Indeed Swaine and Johnston argue that China was mindful of post-Tiananmen criticism, making "scoring diplomatic points [a] critical factor in determining when it would sign."²⁷ On the other hand, Swaine and Johnston also note that signing on to the

²² David M. Lampton, *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000* (Stanford Univ Pr, 2001), 259. The "three halts" proposal was that the two superpowers would halt testing, improvement and manufacture of nuclear weapons, and reduce stockpiles by 50 per cent, as a condition for other nuclear weapons states halting testing.

²³ Zhu, 'The Evolution of China's Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy,' 45.

²⁴ Johnston, 'Learning Versus Adaptation,' 37-39.

²⁵ Shirley Kan and Zachary Davis, 'China,' in *Nuclear Proliferation after the Cold War*, ed. Mitchell Reiss and Robert Litwak (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1994), 150.

²⁶ Nicola Horsburgh, *China and Global Nuclear Order : From Estrangement to Active Engagement*, First edition. ed. (Oxford University Press, 2015), 106.

²⁷ Swaine and Johnston, 'China and Arms Control Institutions,' 109.

NPT was “a relatively painless step” which imposed few intrusions in terms of inspections. Given China’s interest in preventing nuclear proliferation throughout Asia, there were “many realpolitik reasons” for China to sign the NPT.²⁸

In contrast to the NPT, most scholars see the CTBT as carrying notable costs and as materially constraining China. These costs include limiting weapons development, the impact on sovereignty of inspection and compliance, and freezing China’s nuclear arsenal well behind the rest of the Permanent Five. China’s program ended after just 45 nuclear tests, the same number as the UK and far behind the US at 1030, the USSR/Russia at 715 and even France with 210 tests.²⁹

Scholars have called the CTBT China’s most constraining treaty so far, as “most specialists in the testing community, in the PLA, and even among Western specialists on Chinese nuclear weapons argue that the treaty was a ‘sacrifice’ for China, and that there are now certain weapons designs that are closed off to the Chinese.”³⁰ Nicola Horsburgh notes that it left gaps in the survivability, safety, capabilities, data and experience of Chinese nuclear forces,³¹ while Ann Kent argues that China made many concessions in the CTBT negotiations, for example on requirements for no first use declarations, security assurances, the right to conduct peaceful nuclear explosions, and allowing on-site inspections. Kent also notes concerns of Chinese experts at the time that the treaty would leave China’s international status merely on a par with the Britain and France. As a result, she argues, “There is general agreement that, in becoming the

²⁸ Ibid., 108, 110.

²⁹ Sun Xiangli, *Implications of a Comprehensive Test Ban for China’s Security Policy* (Stanford: Center for International Security and Arms Control, 1997), 3-4.

³⁰ Alastair Iain Johnston and Paul Evans, ‘China and Multilateral Security Institutions,’ in *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power*, ed. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross (Routledge, 1999).

³¹ Horsburgh, *China and Global Nuclear Order*, 108.

second signatory of the CTBT after the United States in March 1996, it allowed a significant diminution of its sovereignty.”³²

Concerns about the costs of the CTBT have also been bluntly expressed by Chinese scholars, including former military officers and arms control negotiators. Sun Xiangli has highlighted the technical costs to national security: the CTBT was a tough treaty for a latecomer, as it caught China in the middle of its programme and testing was cut short.³³ Sun wrote in 1997 that “China is not technically ready for a CTB [Comprehensive Test Ban]... A CTB would seem to not only freeze the gap between China and other nuclear states, but very likely enlarge this gap also.”³⁴ Similar concerns were clearly stated by former Chinese negotiator, PLA Colonel Zou Yunhua, who says: “It was difficult for China to declare a moratorium on nuclear testing. The CTBT has direct bearing on China’s fundamental security interests. China’s plan for testing was shortened and cut for the sake of the treaty.”³⁵ These expressions of the costs have left scholars to explain what China believed it would gain in return, and these arguments are outlined next.

Instrumental explanations

Some scholars argue that even if the CTBT constrained China’s nuclear weapons program, technical developments made testing less vital. For example, David Bachman argues that while the treaty “seems to fly in the face of the interests of China’s military,” it is possible that China had obtained supercomputing capabilities allowing

³² Kent cites interviews with anonymous Chinese nuclear experts. Ann Kent, *Beyond Compliance: China, International Organisations and Global Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 82.

³³ Sun Xiangli, *Implications of a Comprehensive Test Ban for China’s Security Policy*; Zou Yunhua, *China and the CTBT Negotiations* (Stanford: Center for International Security and Cooperation, 1998).

³⁴ Sun Xiangli, *Implications of a Comprehensive Test Ban for China’s Security Policy*, 8, 9.

³⁵ Zou Yunhua, *China and the CTBT Negotiations*, 5.

advanced weapons simulations. “In this case, China’s commitment to the CTBT costs China and the PLA relatively little and earns them some international recognition and approval.”³⁶ Another view is that aside from further legitimising China’s status as a nuclear weapons state, the treaty helped shift attention away from China and onto concerns about nuclear proliferation on the Korean peninsula and in South Asia.³⁷

Other scholars put greater weight upon the CTBT’s costs, but argue that these were offset in Beijing’s view by benefits elsewhere. In particular, several writers stress that while China was well behind the other “legitimate” nuclear weapons states, from Beijing’s perspective a freeze would ensure no widening of the gap with the established powers, and would lock in China’s advantage over emerging nuclear rivals such as India.³⁸ These explain the signing in broadly realpolitik terms.

Costs of isolation

A combination of material, instrumental considerations and more ideational factors come into play when scholars consider the role of China’s international image. As Evan Medeiros puts it:

China cares about its image because it wants to be accepted as a member of the international community and does not like being ostracised or otherwise isolated, especially in international institutions. China pays attention to its reputation because of the material benefits that it believes can stem from a positive one, in terms of access to trade, aid, technology and investment.³⁹

³⁶ David Bachman, 'Structure and Process in the Making of Chinese Foreign Policy,' in *China and the World: Chinese Foreign Policy Faces the New Millennium*, ed. Samuel S. Kim (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998), 47.

³⁷ J. Mohan Malik, 'China and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime,' *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 22, no. 3 (2000): 453.

³⁸ Gill, 'Two Steps Forward, One Step Back,' 101; Garrett and Glaser, 'Chinese Perspectives on Nuclear Arms Control,' 58-59. These points were also made by former negotiator Li Bin in an interview with the author, 22 March 2016.

³⁹ Evan S. Medeiros, *China's International Behavior: Activism, Opportunism and Diversification* (RAND Corporation, 2009), 17.

Within this subset of the literature, reputational arguments are often couched in terms of China not wanting to lose reputation by being isolated or ostracised.

The literature sees China comparing the costs of joining the treaty with the costs of isolation. In their detailed account of interviews with Chinese negotiators, Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser also note Chinese concerns about being isolated on arms control and nonproliferation issues. They note that notwithstanding possible security benefits noted above, “Beijing’s decisions in 1992 to become a signatory to the NPT and in 1993 to agree to join negotiations aimed at concluding a CTBT were made primarily in response to international political pressure.”⁴⁰ On this issue, Wendy Frieman argues that China relinquished weapons development options, and even if it had planned to stop testing anyway, it had now committed formally and publicly to the test ban regime. As a result, she notes, “the gap between China’s inventory and that of the two nuclear superpowers is so large that China has been effectively frozen into a position of perpetual inferiority.”⁴¹ On the other hand, Frieman contends that what mattered more to China was to support its position among developing countries, to reinforce its credentials as a P5 member, and to join the club of ‘responsible’ countries:

China was able to avoid the political isolation, both within the P-5 and in the larger international community, which would have resulted from remaining on the outside. There is little doubt that refusing to sign the treaty would have carried a serious political stigma even if China were to refrain de facto from nuclear testing.⁴²

The above assessment of costs and benefits is consistent with the argument put forward by Etel Solingen that nuclear proliferation is more associated with closed, introspective states and societies, compared with those that are internationally engaged. While Solingen’s major study looked at new proliferators, not China specifically, her overall

⁴⁰ Garrett and Glaser, ‘Chinese Perspectives on Nuclear Arms Control,’ 76.

⁴¹ Wendy Frieman, *China, Arms Control, and Nonproliferation* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 59.

⁴² Ibid., 57.

point is that internationalised economies, compared with closed ones, have many motivations to conform to international nuclear regimes: “The former have incentives to avoid the political, economic, reputational, and opportunity costs of acquiring nuclear weapons because such costs impair a domestic agenda favouring internationalisation.”⁴³ This argument can be applied to China’s situation where economic opening-up was a priority. As Bates Gill notes, “the grand national strategy of reform and opening comes close to holy writ among Chinese leaders,” and he points out that in the interests of economic development, Beijing was motivated to engage in a full range of relations with the international community.⁴⁴

China “learning” normative values

A third approach in the literature argues that China did not make costly commitments to arms control simply to avoid greater costs, but because it had changed its normative values on the issue. As championed by Johnston, a state such as China changes its cost-benefit calculus due to interactions in arms control processes. Adaptation means changes that are tactical in nature and intended to preserve China’s relative capabilities, such as diplomatic offensives to break out of post-Tiananmen isolation and improve bilateral relations with Washington.⁴⁵ Learning implies “a basic shift in how China understands its security and the role of arms control in this calculus” coming about due to high-profile negotiations and exposure to audiences of negotiators.⁴⁶ As Johnston and Paul Evans put it, in the 1980s and 90s, “China’s self-identification underwent a change, a blurring,” so that traditional *realpolitik* major power identity became linked to

⁴³ Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics : Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 5.

⁴⁴ Bates Gill, *Rising Star: China’s New Security Diplomacy* (Brookings Institution, 2007), 99.

⁴⁵ Johnston, ‘Learning Versus Adaptation,’ 30.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 30, 59.

“a newer identity as a responsible major power” with status partly measured by participation in institutions.⁴⁷ Whereas major power status once meant material assets such as imperial power, it now involves “participation in status quo institutions that regulate, more or less non coercively, interstate relations.”⁴⁸ This explains why China was likely to be susceptible to socialisation in this case.

Johnston rejects arguments that China joined the CTBT simply to improve its international relations or particularly bilateral relations with Washington, as this could have been done in less costly ways.⁴⁹ Johnston argues that Chinese decision-makers identified China with the status role of “responsible major power”, and therefore became sensitive to social rewards and punishments of others who were identified as part of this group.

I think it was clear that Chinese decision makers were well aware of this discourse, and of the back patting benefits and opprobrium costs involved in the CTBT process... China could not stay out of, or in the end sabotage, the CTBT because of the costs to China’s international image and because of the image benefits from participating in one of the pillar treaties of the non-proliferation regime.⁵⁰

Johnston’s view is that China, wishing to “compete in order to acquire the status of a winner”, was receptive to arguments about behaving consistent with its self-identity as a high-status actor.⁵¹

Other scholars have also explored “learning” in the context of China’s multilateral engagement. David Shambaugh describes a “fundamental evolution” in Chinese

⁴⁷ Johnston and Evans, 'China and Multilateral Security Institutions,' 257.

⁴⁸ Johnston, *Social States*, 87.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 112. Johnston also counters the argument that the treaty was cost-free by noting the frequent descriptions by Chinese experts of the treaty as a ‘sacrifice’, especially by cutting short the development of smaller and lighter warheads; the difficulties the treaty posed for stockpile management; and the likelihood that the final decision to sign was made before Beijing knew the outcome of the final series of tests.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 114-15.

⁵¹ Ibid., 84.

attitudes toward multilateral institutions,⁵² while Mingquan Zhu sees a continuous learning process, where thanks to “frequent exchanges with the outside world, many new concepts and ideas relating to arms control and nonproliferation have increased in their influence on Chinese leaders and the professional segment of society.”⁵³ David Lampton argues that there is a feeling that indeed China enters international arrangements largely tactically, but this is a “slippery slope” leading to changes of beliefs.⁵⁴ Even Yong Deng concludes that China’s status discontent might yet be managed peacefully, because “China’s conception of status now entails seeking international legitimacy as a rising great power.”⁵⁵ Similarly, Garrett and Glaser argue that China’s primary approach to its international relations was ‘self-help’, but by the mid-1990s there was “growing support in China for the view that multilateral agreements to reduce mutual threats can provide meaningful complements to self-help measures,” boosting security and deflecting international criticism.⁵⁶ Against this, Bates Gill gives a useful analysis that China mainly takes a *realpolitik* or “adaptive” approach, but over time the imperative to learn becomes more pressing; this tends to make China more conforming to international norms: “The *realpolitik* approach is increasingly constrained and shaped by the intricate web of international dependencies, commitments, status relationships, and security realities that China faces.”⁵⁷

⁵² David Shambaugh, ‘Return to the Middle Kingdom? China and Asia in the Early Twenty-First Century,’ in *Power Shift: China and Asia’s New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (University of California Press, 2005), 27.

⁵³ Zhu, ‘The Evolution of China’s Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy,’ 47.

⁵⁴ David M. Lampton, ‘China’s Foreign and National Security Policy-Making Process: Is It Changing and Does It Matter?,’ in *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, ed. David M. Lampton (Stanford University Press, 2001), 34-35.

⁵⁵ Yong Deng, ‘Better Than Power: “International Status” in Chinese Foreign Policy,’ in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, ed. Yong Deng and Fei-Ling Wang (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 66.

⁵⁶ Garrett and Glaser, ‘Chinese Perspectives on Nuclear Arms Control,’ 49.

⁵⁷ Gill, ‘Two Steps Forward, One Step Back,’ 280.

Assessment of the literature

The literature includes a range of explanations for China joining the CTBT. These include some security benefits that could explain the decision in realist terms, concerns about China's legitimacy, image and status that mostly related to maintaining an environment for unimpeded domestic economic development, and a process of learning among Chinese elites that saw them put value in China's status role as a "responsible major power". A preponderance of the literature sees the treaty as a costly one, and also refers in some form to China's prestige or status concerns, and this makes the case a "most likely" one to find status at work as a causal factor. This section puts the discussion of status and the CTBT in the broader context of China and its status beliefs, before turning to the outstanding gaps in the literature on the case.

Literature on China and status

As with the other case studies in this project, it is necessary to compare references to status in the literature on the case with broader literature on the status roles of China. Certainly, much writing about the international relations of China holds that one of Beijing's leading motivations is restoration of the country's great power status.⁵⁸ However, China often appears to be torn in its pursuit of status: on the one hand, it is seen as a prestige-maximising state, engaged in an "uphill struggle" against the existing international order;⁵⁹ on the other, China is cautious, wanting to ensure that its quest to become a great power did not provoke a preventative reaction from the United States or

⁵⁸ See for example: Larson and Shevchenko, 'Status Seekers.'; Shogo Suzuki, 'Journey to the West: China Debates Its 'Great Power' Identity,' *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 42, no. 3 (2014); Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*.

⁵⁹ Pu and Schweller, 'Status Signalling,' 142-43.

its allies.⁶⁰ This contradiction is inherent to the place of great power status in China's national goals, as Yong Deng states it:

China's struggle for status is about creating an international environment that allows the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-state to continue self-paced reforms at home; increase power and recognition abroad to secure China's core interests; reassure other states of China's nonthreatening intent; and project its influence in Asia and beyond.⁶¹

In Deng's analysis, both power and recognition must balance each other if China is to regain the status it believes it warrants: "Without power there is no recognition. Yet power without recognition fuels the fear of a China threat," which would jeopardise the economic project and thus the major basis of China's rise.⁶²

China's dissatisfaction with the international order's status quo is because, as Aaron Friedberg writes: "Their leaders and people often feel that they were unfairly left out when the pie was divided up, and may even believe that, because of their prior weakness, they were robbed of what was rightfully theirs."⁶³ Michael Swaine and Ashley Tellis describe China's grand strategy as follows:

The traditional objectives that the Chinese state has pursued over the centuries still remain... These objectives include assuring domestic order and social well-being; maintaining an adequate defence against threats to the heartland; increasing the level of influence and control over the periphery with an eye to warding off threats that may eventually menace the political regime; and restoring China to regional pre-eminence while attaining the respect of its peers as a true great power marked by high levels of economic and technological development, political stability, military prowess, and manifest uprightness.⁶⁴

The great power status that China seeks is, however, built up from a combination of preponderant material power, the willingness to use it, and social recognition.⁶⁵ The pursuit of social recognition is one explanation for why China has been motivated by such a "strong sense of grievance at past humiliations inflicted by external powers,"

⁶⁰ Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, 24-5.

⁶¹ Deng, *China's Struggle for Status*, 21.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Aaron L. Friedberg, 'The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?,' *International Security* 30, no. 2 (2005): 19.

⁶⁴ Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2000), 178-79.

⁶⁵ Goh, *The Struggle for Order*, 211.

which may explain why China has acted against its economic interests, for example during the 1995-96 Taiwan Straits crisis.⁶⁶

The other side of the status equation is that China came to value a positive reputation and membership of international forums because of the material benefits they have brought. Evan Medeiros argues that China's long-term diplomatic priorities include sovereignty and territorial integrity, economic development, and international respect and status. He adds that China's international status has generally been linked to its permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council, possession of nuclear weapons, large population and landmass, and historic legacy as the major power of Asia. China cares about both image and reputation separately:

China cares about its image because it wants to be accepted as a member of the international community and does not like being ostracised or otherwise isolated, especially in international institutions. China pays attention to its reputation because of the material benefits that it believes can stem from a positive one, in terms of access to trade, aid, technology and investment.⁶⁷

An interesting perspective on these status values comes from opinion surveys. Yong Deng writes that a survey of Chinese youth of attitudes toward the reform period showed China's international status (seen as China's ranking in international hierarchy and its ability to protect its interests and project power) rated among the top three concerns, above economic development.⁶⁸ The status cues that were most valued in China included its membership of the Permanent Five and its nuclear status; its membership of international institutions, including the World Trade Organisation, APEC, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation; and China's image as a 'responsible cooperative power'. In other words, this is what Chinese scholars have

⁶⁶ Larson and Shevchenko, 'Status Seekers,' 94.

⁶⁷ Medeiros, *China's International Behavior*, 17.

⁶⁸ According to the survey, this priority for status was given by 67% of 25,000 respondents. Deng, 'Better Than Power,' 52-53.

called “international acceptance”, measured by nature of China’s relationships with US and other great powers.⁶⁹

To look at beliefs about status from another perspective, Chinese strategic cultures have been described as consisting of a Confucian-Mencian strand that is conflict averse and defensive minded, and a Realpolitik strand which favours offensive, military solutions.

“Chinese elites believe strongly that their country’s strategic tradition is pacifist, nonexpansionist, and purely defensive but at the same time able to justify virtually any use of force—including offensive and preemptive strikes—as defensive in nature.”⁷⁰

The challenge for Beijing is therefore “to devise policies that would facilitate a continuing increase in the country’s power relative to others while minimising the likelihood that this trend would stimulate potential adversaries to offset China’s efforts.”⁷¹ Some signs of this were visible early in the reform period; one article notes that the ‘new’ China needed to appear peaceful, and support for arms control helped to ‘clean up’ China’s image: “These actions are understood as an assertion by China of what it sees as its rightful place at the world’s top table, but they are also in part a recognition that ‘top nations’ have a responsibility for world peace.”⁷² However, to deal with its conflicting goals requires China to think in terms of “comprehensive national power”: the means toward achieving China’s strategic objectives, which include protecting sovereignty, maintaining security, preventing Taiwan independence, securing favourable national image, and promoting economic development.⁷³

⁶⁹ Yong Deng cites Yan Xuetong using the ‘international acceptance’ term. Ibid., 58-60.

⁷⁰ Andrew Scobell, *China and Strategic Culture* (Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), 3.

⁷¹ Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, 24-5.

⁷² Gerald Segal, ‘China and Arms Control,’ *The World Today* 41, no. 8/9 (1985): 164.

⁷³ Christine A. Cleary, ‘Culture, Strategy and Security’ in *China’s Nuclear Future*, ed. Paul J. Bolt and Albert S. Willner (Lynne Rienner, 2006), 15-16.

An assessment of the literature should let us conclude that the CTBT may well have carried modest national security benefits such as freezing China's advantages over India or other proliferating states, but these were almost certainly offset by the costs in terms of halting a nuclear weapons program after only a very limited number of tests. This then leads us to consider whether the attractions of status are sufficient to explain the costly decision. Here general approaches, such as outlined by Solingen, suggest that any state engaging in intensive international economic engagement will be more inclined to conform to international nuclear norms. Explanations that incorporate socialisation, such as Johnston's, suggest that a process of learning allowed Chinese decision-makers to embrace the "responsible major power" status role, which explains their willingness to accept the costs of the CTBT.

Socialisation explanations can help explain the decision because the 1996 treaty did follow a period of increased engagement, which provided relevant opportunities for Chinese decision-makers to "learn". Furthermore, after China signed on to the NPT, decision-makers became more aware of the status benefits of being recognised as a fully legitimate nuclear weapons state, a status role that would be reinforced by participation in the CTBT as well. However, a key gap remains because this literature does not by itself explain why Chinese decision-makers were so receptive to learning. More specific factors are needed to connect decision-makers' greater awareness of legitimacy as a part of a specific kind of major power status role, with their decision that this role necessitated joining a costly multilateral treaty. Specifically, this role refers to what scholars have called China's "identity-based desire to maximise status as a participant

in the legitimate international institutions that regulate state behaviour.”⁷⁴ The argument in the following section is that China’s status crisis after Tiananmen was an additional causal factor forcing revaluations of China’s status position. The analysis of this case study explains how this status crisis may fill these outstanding gaps in the literature.

⁷⁴ Swaine and Johnston, 'China and Arms Control Institutions,' 93.

SECTION B: CASE ANALYSIS

Analysing the case

While scholars continue to debate China's motivations for signing the CTBT, this analysis will look specifically at changes in Chinese prestige-building in the period between the 1989 Tiananmen incident and the decision to sign the treaty in 1996. This section argues that perceptions in Beijing that the post-Tiananmen status crisis was a significant threat were a contributing factor to the reassessment of the CTBT. That revaluation occurred alongside greater engagement in international institutions, and the increase in normative and ideational interactions that came with this. As a senior scholar of China's international relations, Xia Liping of Tongji University, points out, "The mid 1990s was a period of learning in the international system, and judging the multilateral international system. The NPT and the CTBT were two good examples of this."⁷⁵ In contrast to the NPT, as we have seen, the CTBT marked a sharp qualitative break as it was the first time China had joined a treaty that put material constraints on its own military capability. The key theme of this case analysis is that the period 1989-1995 saw a process of learning triggered by Tiananmen in which China re-evaluated its status objectives, ultimately leading it to sign the test-ban agreement.

The review of the literature on the case provides the starting point for this analysis. The review concluded that status was likely to be a factor in the case, but we needed better explanations for why Chinese decision-makers were so sensitive to status concerns in the lead-up to deciding to sign the CTBT. To pre-empt the arguments of this section, even if decision-makers were more aware of arms control norms and sensitive to

⁷⁵ Xia Liping, interview with the author, 29 March 2016.

acceptance in arms control communities, why did they care? Additional factors could help explain why decision-makers concluded that status concerns could pose a real threat to China's interests. The aim of this analysis is to track how those status concerns may have taken effect, and this chapter adopts a similar approach to the other two case studies of this project.

As with the other cases in this thesis, this chapter breaks the events of the case study into three phases. The first phase, normal status-seeking, assumes a period in which the state built prestige toward desired status goals in a relatively conservative way. In China's case, it is a matter of showing that in the lead-up to 1989, status-seeking was progressed according to predictable cost-benefit trade-offs. For example, in that period China joined a number of international security-related agreements, but these were generally not puzzling in the sense of being costly to China's own national security. The second phase is the status crisis, where unexpected events are perceived as threatening status goals, forcing a revaluation of policy trade-offs. The status crisis described here involves Tiananmen and the following years, with a spike of "China threat" concerns around 1995-96. Finally, the case looks for a third phase of activity – enhanced status-seeking. The following argues that this phase involved efforts to build prestige, offsetting the status crisis, which exhibit an increased appetite for risk.

This case study explores the signing of the CTBT to see whether it is an example of this process. In terms of the methodology, compared with other cases it is more difficult to gain Chinese decision-makers' personal views on the status crisis. Instead, it is necessary to study evidence of China's actual behaviour, or references to concerns in Chinese publications, to assess that a crisis took place. Afterwards however, it is

possible to observe whether China had intensified its pursuit of valuable prestige, which can provide evidence that it had moved to a phase of enhanced status-seeking.

Normal status seeking: Before Tiananmen

Throughout the reform period, China's status goals were dominated by the need to work within an international environment dominated by the United States and other advanced democracies. Leaders in Beijing were well aware that established major powers would have the critical role in according or withdrawing recognition of China as it aspired to join their ranks. Yong Deng explains that for China status is not only about developing the domestic economy, as noted above, but also "increasing overall positive recognition of its foreign policy practice and prospect for growing into a great power within the globalized world."⁷⁶ This section reviews a narrow slice of Chinese status-seeking, focusing on engagement with international institutions and the arms control regime. During the post-Tiananmen status crisis it was possible to observe distinct changes in Chinese behaviour in these institutions.

Greater international engagement

China's reform-era status-seeking strategy stemmed from Deng Xiaoping's assessment that the global environment of the 1980s would be more peaceful than the height of the Cold War, handing China an opportunity to prioritise domestic economic development. This domestic-economy-focused strategy is described by Bates Gill as entailing three

⁷⁶ Yong Deng, 'The Power and Politics of Recognition: Status in China's Foreign Relations,' in *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics : Global and Regional Perspectives*, ed. Thomas J. Volgy, et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 78.

goals: ensuring a stable environment, including by defusing external challenges; carefully managing growing wealth and power to extend influence while reassuring neighbours; and dealing with US primacy while avoiding conflict.⁷⁷ From this starting point, China set out on the path of achieving great power status through gaining “institutional privileges in the decision-making process of global governance, thus giving it equal political power with other members.”⁷⁸

Examples of China’s general international engagement including its joining of economic forums such as the IMF and World Bank in 1980 and APEC in 1989. It was admitted to the GATT as an observer in 1982 and applied for full membership in 1986, and began the process of joining the WTO from 1995. It is worth noting that the period immediately after 1989 saw China attempt to continue normal status-seeking.

Accepting nonproliferation norms

A specific pattern of status-seeking can be observed in China’s gradual steps to acquire legitimacy through engagement with the international nonproliferation and arms control regimes. Its moves toward accepting nuclear nonproliferation norms were consistent with a pattern of status-seeking at a limited price. Indeed, a similar point could be made about China’s own nuclear weapons, which were developed at a very slow rate. Fravel and Medeiros note that China brought its first ICBM, the DF-5, online in the early 1980s, yet a decade later China only possessed four of the missiles.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Bates Gill, 'China's Evolving Regional Security Strategy,' in *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (University of California Press, 2005), 247-48.

⁷⁸ Suzuki, 'Journey to the West: China Debates Its 'Great Power' Identity,' 637.

⁷⁹ M. Taylor Fravel and Evan S. Medeiros, 'China's Search for Assured Retaliation : The Evolution of Chinese Nuclear Strategy and Force Structure,' *International Security* 35, no. 2 (2010): 54. Fravel and Medeiros drew the number of missiles from: John Wilson Lewis and Hua Di, 'China's Ballistic Missile Programs : Technologies, Strategies, Goals,' *International Security* 17, no. 2 (1992): 19.

A pattern of gradualism followed in terms of China's nonproliferation policies. In 1979, Deng could still condemn the NPT and say that unless they themselves disarmed, "the nuclear powers have no right to prevent non-nuclear countries from possessing nuclear weapons."⁸⁰ The attacks on the NPT were seen as a way to break the superpowers' nuclear dominance, and some in Beijing thought of nuclear cooperation as a way to gain influence in the developing world.⁸¹ Most dramatically, in 1982 China is then believed to have transferred to Pakistan a complete nuclear weapon design and fissile material.⁸² But from this doubtful start, during the 1980s China gradually moved toward nonproliferation norms.

During the 1980s, a key factor in Chinese calculations was the wish for better relations with Washington, as it was believed that "close relations with the United States would affirm China's status as a major power."⁸³ To be sure, Chinese motivations for cooperation in that decade also included the promise of American civilian nuclear technical assistance, but the desire for closer political ties appeared to be a significant motivation in China's nonproliferation advances.⁸⁴ Some steps on arms control included participation in UN disarmament meetings in Geneva, ratifying the Outer Space Treaty, and proposing elimination of chemical weapons.⁸⁵ In terms of nuclear nonproliferation, some of China's moves included: in 1984, China announcing its general support for the principle of nuclear nonproliferation, as well as joining the IAEA and accepting its

⁸⁰ Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping, "Chinese Statements on Proliferation Issues- 1979-1991," Xinhua, February 14, 1979, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), Special Memorandum, December 18, 1991, p. 1, quoted in: Zachary S. Davis, 'China's Nonproliferation and Export Control Policies: Boom or Bust for the NPT Regime?,' *Asian Survey* 35, no. 6 (1995): 589.

⁸¹ Evan S. Medeiros, *Reluctant Restraint : The Evolution of Chinese Nonproliferation Policies and Practices, 1980-2004* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 33-34.

⁸² Ibid., 40.

⁸³ Ibid., 47.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 44-45.

⁸⁵ Segal, 'China and Arms Control,' 164.

export safeguards; in 1985 reaching nuclear cooperation agreements with Argentina and Brazil (both then pursuing their own nuclear programs); and in 1987 issuing internal regulations on exports of nuclear materials.⁸⁶ Against this, needed to be balanced China's continuing proliferation behaviour throughout the decade, including helping Pakistan with uranium enrichment and nuclear reactors, and providing nuclear technology to Iran.⁸⁷

This process can be assessed as normal status-seeking because we can see the continued trade-off not only between costs and benefits but between status roles. Benefits in terms of relations with Washington were traded against the costs to export industries and to relations with customer states. China's gradual consideration of a role as a respected major power was balanced by its role as a regional power with alliances in Pakistan and elsewhere. This took place against the backdrop of reduced superpower tensions and the newly normalised relationship with Washington. Former arms control negotiator Zou Yunhua recalled that China's 1985 announcement of a moratorium on atmospheric testing was an effort "to do something in line with this relaxation of international tension."⁸⁸ The entente with the United States was a key factor in giving Chinese decision-makers space to refocus on domestic development and concomitant requirements for international legitimacy: "The reduction of the nuclear threat to China prepared the ground for China to change its position toward international nonproliferation efforts."⁸⁹ This environment would sharply change with the crisis that occurred from 1989 onwards.

⁸⁶ Medeiros, *Reluctant Restraint*, 37.

⁸⁷ Davis, 'China's Nonproliferation and Export Control Policies,' 590.

⁸⁸ Zou Yunhua, *China and the CTBT Negotiations*, 3.

⁸⁹ Hongyu Zhang, 'From Opponent to Proponent: The Rational Evolution of China's Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy,' *Asian Politics & Policy* 7, no. 2 (2015): 290.

The post-1989 status crisis

This chapter takes the period from 1989 to 1996 to be one of status crisis for China, as during this time not only did Beijing reassess key prestige-building priorities, but key incidents also forced clarification of the status roles to which China aspired. Compared with the other case studies, the crisis is extended, and it included periods of easing as well as acute pressure. While it refers to the post-Tiananmen period, in fact the crisis was brought on by a combination of international reactions to Tiananmen plus the effects on Chinese perceptions of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thanks to these events, in contrast to the optimism of the 1980s, by the start of the new decade China was left relegated to an “out-group” by the community of democratic states and forced to seek a new relationship between itself and the world.⁹⁰ As a result of this hostile international environment, Yong Deng argues, “the Chinese political elite believed that the party-state was beleaguered, marginalised and threatened in the emerging world order.”⁹¹ China’s status-seeking during this period should therefore be examined through the lens of crisis.

There were several key elements of the extended crisis of the first half of the 1990s. Professor Fan Jishe of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences observed that the combination of factors leading up to China’s decision to join the CTBT included post-Tiananmen pressure, specifically the “human rights-Most Favored Nation linkage”, the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis, and the indefinite extension of the NPT.⁹² This section

⁹⁰ Deng, 'The Power and Politics of Recognition,' 79-80.

⁹¹ Deng, 'Better Than Power,' 67.

⁹² Fan Jishe, interview with the author, 22 March 2016.

breaks down the crisis mostly in those terms, as well as setting out the nature of the international context that made Beijing so sensitive to threats to its status.

China's optimism, during the 1980s, about a more peaceful international environment was not only due to closer relations with Washington, but also a reconciliation with Moscow. In a useful analysis of events, Avery Goldstein notes that this reached full normalisation with the visit to Beijing of Mikhail Gorbachev during the May 1989 Tiananmen protests,⁹³ and indeed "by the end of the 1980s, China's international situation could hardly have seemed brighter."⁹⁴ The onset of the post-Cold War period was much more precarious, with what had been promising relations with the two powers now perceived as serious security threats. As Goldstein explains:

The United States threatened China not only because it spearheaded the initial post-Tiananmen effort to isolate Beijing and impose sanctions, but also because its subsequent effort to resume constructive engagement carried the risk (for Americans, the promise) of what Beijing referred to as peaceful evolution – a process of fundamental political change that the CCP believed would lead to domestic unrest, if not regime collapse.⁹⁵

The threat from the USSR was meanwhile one of example, as leaders in Beijing feared democratic reformers would be inspired by the democratisation of the former Soviet bloc.⁹⁶

Elements of the status crisis

One reason the status crisis became a serious factor in Chinese perceptions was that Beijing at first underestimated the impact of Tiananmen on American attitudes towards their country. There were efforts towards bilateral rapprochement, but with the hostility toward China exhibited by the US Congress, relations were effectively frozen for the

⁹³ Goldstein, 'An Emerging China's Emerging Grand Strategy,' 65-67.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 65.

⁹⁵ Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, 44.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 45.

remainder of the George H.W. Bush administration. China felt the effects of the post-1989 status crisis in several ways. While it was true that the Clinton administration's decision in 1993 severed the human rights-MFN nexus, trade was sufficiently important that this remained a sensitive issue for Chinese decision-makers.

A major spike in the status crisis occurred in early 1993, with the newly inaugurated Bill Clinton administration facing a dilemma over whether to ask Congress to renew China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) trading status. Without notable improvements in Beijing, human rights issues were almost certain to be linked to that status. David Lampton points out that the executive order decided upon by Clinton in May 1993, placing multiple demands on Beijing regarding human rights, threatened a further deterioration in bilateral relations:

By publicly articulating the threat and setting a deadline, Clinton made the standard of his success the public humiliation of the PRC's leaders and the alteration of patterns of internal PRC governance—a price few nations would pay for market access, let alone one as proud as China.”⁹⁷

Lampton colourfully remarks that “the second half of 1993 was the U.S.-China relations equivalent of a hellish Hieronymus Bosch painting,” including multiple incidents such as Washington imposing sanctions on Beijing for alleged missile technology transfers to Pakistan.⁹⁸ In addition, the US Congress resolved to oppose Beijing's bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games, contributing to the failure of the bid, and (as James Fewsmith records) provoking outrage in China. There was further friction the same year when the US Navy blocked the Chinese ship *Yinhe* from entering the Persian Gulf, even though the ship was later found not to be carrying any chemical weapons precursors. “Americans quickly forgot the incident, but the Chinese did not,” Fewsmith notes.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 41.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁹⁹ Joseph Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen : The Politics of Transition*, Cambridge Modern China Series (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4.

During late 1993 and early 1994, pressure within Washington from business, the foreign policy establishment and even human rights groups, as well messages from US allies, helped prompt the Clinton administration to reconsider. Finally, in May 1994, Clinton announced a comprehensive backdown from the policy of linkage.¹⁰⁰ Temporarily, Chinese leaders believed they had achieved a diplomatic breakthrough. Indeed, the presence of President Jiang Zemin at the APEC summit in November 1993 was thought in Beijing to mark the end of China's post-Tiananmen isolation, and the start of a new phase of US-China relations.¹⁰¹ However, this optimism was premature as a new crisis over the Taiwan Strait would soon threaten China's status even further.

The 1995-96 crisis and the "China threat" issue

The Taiwan Strait crisis of July 1995 to March 1996 was intended by Beijing to signal to Taipei and Washington its preparedness to use force against Taiwan independence, but resulted in a strong US response and threatened to undo much of what China had achieved since Tiananmen.¹⁰² A key measure of how seriously Chinese decision-makers took the fall-out from the 1995-96 situation can be seen in their reactions to the "China threat" issue. Beijing's sensitivity and concerns can be traced by the way it intensified its messaging to try to refute the issue. A paper by Herbert Yee and Zhu Feng notes that there was very little mention in China before 1995 of the 'China threat theory' [*Zhongguo weixielun*].¹⁰³ "However, the PRC's responses to the China threat issue rose

¹⁰⁰ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 43-45.

¹⁰¹ Deng, 'Better Than Power,' 61.

¹⁰² For accounts of the crisis, see: Robert S. Ross, 'The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation,' *International Security* 25, no. 2 (2000); Andrew Scobell, 'Show of Force: Chinese Soldiers, Statesmen, and the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis,' *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no. 2 (2000).

¹⁰³ Herbert Yee and Zhu Feng, 'Chinese Perspectives of the China Threat: Myth or Reality?,' in *The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality*, ed. Herbert Yee and Ian Storey (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 21.

sharply in 1996, especially after the face-off between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and US aircraft carriers in the Taiwan Straits.” According to Yee and Zhu, in 1996 there were 12 People's Daily articles directly refuting the China threat, with 56 reports mentioning and criticising the accusations, as well as eight academic journal articles on the subject.¹⁰⁴ The table by Yee and Zhu reproduced below outlines the upsurge in ‘China threat’ articles appearing during 1995-96:¹⁰⁵

Number of articles and commentaries on the “China threat” appearing in the Chinese press and journals (1991-2000):¹⁰⁶

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
People's Daily	0	1	4	0	4	12	2	1	2	2
New China (Xinhua News Agency)	0	0	9	0	8	9	7	2	4	1
Special Topics in Chinese Journals				1	0	8	2	4	5	0
People's University Press Reprints	0	1	4	1	7	17	13			
Chinese Social Science Articles			0	1	8	13	13	5	5	0

The importance of the “China threat” debate was that Beijing was deeply mindful of theories of the security dilemma, particularly notions that if a state has a threatening reputation, other states may balance against it. Deng calls the prospect of a hostile US-

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Table 1.1 at p. 22 of

¹⁰⁶ This table is reproduced in its entirety from: Yee and Zhu Feng, 'Chinese Perspectives of the China Threat: Myth or Reality?', 22.

led coalition “the worst kind of strategic nightmare” for Beijing.¹⁰⁷ Explaining why Chinese elites would act to prevent this from occurring, Deng notes that: “In this age of great power peace, a threat reputation would be particularly damaging to an aspiring great power’s social standing, and hence to its security interests.”¹⁰⁸ Concerns about the suspicions and unforgiving attitudes of the international community are likewise stressed by Goldstein, who notes that by March 1996, “Beijing confronted an international environment potentially more dangerous than at any time since the late 1970s.”¹⁰⁹

Normative pressure on arms control

Against this backdrop of intense scrutiny of China’s behaviour, nuclear issues became a particular flashpoint. Consistent with Alastair Iain Johnston’s analysis, because China had become part of the arms control and nonproliferation regime, it was also much more susceptible to threats to its status as a legitimate member of this order. Once inside the institution, “China was compelled to develop more concrete policy responses to the international arms control agenda, in part due to pressures from both developed and developing states and out of concern for its image as a responsible major power.”¹¹⁰

China was thus in a sensitive position when it faced a wave of international criticism, especially from the rest of Asia, when it conducted a nuclear test on 15 May 1995, only

¹⁰⁷ Yong Deng, 'Reputation and the Security Dilemma: China Reacts to the China Threat Theory,' in *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, ed. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross (Stanford University Press, 2006), 190.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, 47.

¹¹⁰ Johnston, 'Learning Versus Adaptation,' 58.

three days after the end of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference, and again in August that year.¹¹¹

A key reason the criticism struck home was because it shifted from being primarily Western in origin to becoming (in Nicola Horsburgh's words) a "wake-up call" from Asian neighbours and from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). That key Chinese constituency now accused Beijing of "undermining the very moral fabric of nuclear order":

It would seem that in understanding China's decision to enter into negotiations and sign the CTBT, US pressure did not play the most significant role. Instead, hefty criticism for Chinese nuclear tests in the 1990s from Japan, as well as states within the NAM, and the perceived loss of international image as a result of these tests, seemed to play a decisive role in motivating China to enter into negotiations... Never before had developing countries openly denounced China's nuclear tests to such a degree. The impact of this pressure should not be underestimated, since the CTBT was considered by Beijing a costly treaty in terms of security, seriously limiting the future scope of China's nuclear deterrent."¹¹²

The shift in criticism was keenly noted by Chinese negotiators at the time. Zou Yunhua recalls that tests in October 1993 and June 1994 were met with criticism mainly from Western non-nuclear weapons states, but not non-aligned countries. But the 15 May 1995 test "inflicted the most political damage on China", because at the NPT Review and Extension Conference, members had pledged to act with the "utmost restraint" in testing. China's test, before delegations had even left the NPT review conference, angered the Non-Aligned Movement.¹¹³

This judgement about China's particular concern, at that time, about NAM pressure is backed up by Chinese scholars. Fudan University's Shen Dingli noted that it was impossible to surrender China's status as a leader of the developing world: "China wanted to have international status because we saw ourselves as leader of the third

¹¹¹ Garrett and Glaser, 'Chinese Perspectives on Nuclear Arms Control,' 58.

¹¹² Horsburgh, *China and Global Nuclear Order*, 109, 155.

¹¹³ Zou Yunhua, *China and the CTBT Negotiations*, 4-5.

world. How could we say we could decline [to sign] just because we hadn't tested enough? China could not say that without being a hypocrite."¹¹⁴

Enhanced status seeking: Joining the CTBT

China went into defensive crisis-management mode in the immediate post-Tiananmen period. For instance, during the 1990-91 Gulf War, China overcame its positions on sovereignty to acquiesce to (but not vote in favour of) Security Council resolutions authorising military action against Iraq. Once the situation was more stable, Beijing looked to restoring its international position, improving relations with neighbours and addressing border disputes, and establishing or normalising relations with numerous countries.¹¹⁵ Between 1988 and 1994, China established or normalized relations with 18 countries, plus the successor states to the Soviet Union; it then embarked upon a succession of bilateral partnerships; began meetings with ASEAN officials from 1995 (this later grew into the ASEAN+3 mechanism; and after 1991, China settled border disputes with six countries, sometimes on surprisingly advantageous terms to China's neighbours.¹¹⁶ In security forums, Johnston and Evans record the rapid increase in Chinese engagement in multilateral security agreements during the 1980s and 90s. Whereas in 1982 China was an adherent to only two out of nine multilateral arms control agreements, by 1996 when China joined the CTBT, it had signed 12 out of 14 available treaties.¹¹⁷ The pattern of China joining multilateral security agreements was an ongoing process both before and after Tiananmen, but Medeiros points out that

¹¹⁴ Shen Dingli, interview with the author, 26 March 2016.

¹¹⁵ Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, 46-47.

¹¹⁶ Evan S. Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel, 'China's New Diplomacy,' *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2003): 24-26.

¹¹⁷ Johnston and Evans, 'China and Multilateral Security Institutions,' 244.

“China’s intensive diplomacy after the Tiananmen incident in 1989 to rebuild its international image and reputation is an example of the value China puts on these factors in its foreign policy, for both symbolic and material reasons.”¹¹⁸

Alongside greater international engagement in general, China worked to restore its post-Tiananmen position by acting as a legitimate nuclear weapons state. In her detailed study of China and international nuclear institutions, Nicola Horsburgh notes that the expansion of non-proliferation and arms control treaties in the 1990s was one way that China could burnish its reputation as a responsible major power: “China seized this opportunity to promote a more multilateral and representative order and secure its stake in such an order as a credible and legitimate nuclear weapons state.”¹¹⁹ Reinforcing this was the view of one Chinese scholar, Wu Chunsi of the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, who said that after Tiananmen “China changed its perspective on nuclear weapons - intellectual society had a different evaluation of nuclear proliferation.”¹²⁰ This was particularly important in the early 1990s when China was being accused by the US of transferring nuclear weapons and missile technology to Pakistan and the Middle East.¹²¹

While China had long criticised the NPT for discriminating against non-nuclear countries and failing to stop the expansion of superpower arsenals, Beijing announced in August 1991 that it would participate in the NPT regime, and it officially acceded to the treaty in March 1992.¹²² Scholars note that China’s reasons for joining the treaty at the time included the June 1991 decision of France, the only other declared nuclear

¹¹⁸ Medeiros, *China’s International Behavior*, 17.

¹¹⁹ Horsburgh, *China and Global Nuclear Order*, 97.

¹²⁰ Wu Chunsi, interview with the author, 30 March 2016.

¹²¹ Medeiros, *Reluctant Restraint*, 53.

¹²² Garrett and Glaser, ‘Chinese Perspectives on Nuclear Arms Control,’ 50.

power not a Treaty member, to join; Beijing's wish to improve its image with Western countries post-Tiananmen; the end of the Cold War; and growing beliefs that arms control could enhance China's security.¹²³ One Chinese scholar indeed directly linked China's interest in the nuclear non-proliferation regime with restoring international ties after Tiananmen: "Because of the June 4 incident, Western countries imposed sanctions against China so China joined the international NNP [nuclear non-proliferation] mechanism. It was an important action to break the sanctions from Western countries."¹²⁴ To be sure, China's embrace of multilateral arms control was at times halting; China abstained from a UN vote on a comprehensive test ban in 1990, and in 1992 it conducted its biggest-ever nuclear test – a blast that was beyond the limits of the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (albeit a treaty China was not a party to).¹²⁵ Importantly however, China backed unconditional and indefinite extension of the NPT at the NPT Review and Extension Conference in spring 1995.¹²⁶ As Nicola Horsburgh explains: "Crucially, membership of these important institutions enabled China to become, finally, a full-fledged member of global nuclear order."¹²⁷

The decision of China's central leadership to sign the CTBT overruled apparent objections from the military, and indicated that the treaty was perceived as valuable to restoring China's international relations during a time of significant pressure. Johnston notes that "the timing of China's decision to sign the treaty also had much to do with a diplomatic offensive to break out of the post-Tiananmen isolation and to improve relations with the United States."¹²⁸ It helped to remove proliferation and arms control

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Xia Liping, interview with the author, 29 March 2016.

¹²⁵ Gill, 'Two Steps Forward, One Step Back,' 258-59.

¹²⁶ Garrett and Glaser, 'Chinese Perspectives on Nuclear Arms Control,' 51-52; Medeiros, *Reluctant Restraint*, 86.

¹²⁷ Horsburgh, *China and Global Nuclear Order*, 150.

¹²⁸ Johnston, 'Learning Versus Adaptation,' 54.

as an issue in US-China relations. As Nicola Horsburgh notes, by 1996 China saw multilateral arms control as way of getting a “legitimate seat at the table” and reinforcing goals under the ‘New Security Concept’ of countering China threat theories, especially after the Taiwan straits crisis.

China comes under pressure

China entered the CTBT negotiations hoping a treaty would be not be complete until the end of 1996. This would allow a schedule of two tests per year, for a total of 4-6 tests to ensure new designs were reliable. Johnston notes that the weapons testing community thus required delaying tactics of at least two years, which still left the risk that the test series would be unsuccessful.¹²⁹ “This would suggest as well that when Chinese leaders decided when to sign the treaty and when to stop testing, they did so without necessarily knowing exactly how constraining the treaty might be.”¹³⁰ Instead, Johnston argues that China was sensitive to a wave of international criticism of its testing program, accusing China of, among other things, “being irresponsible, being shocking and provocative, offending the feelings of people in the developing world, jeopardising the NPT regime, and being insincere... In other words, China was being accused of moral hypocrisy and of behaviour inconsistent with its (nascent) identity as a responsible major power.”¹³¹

In the CTBT negotiations, China’s initial bargaining positions appeared to initially involve stalling for time in order to allow for more nuclear tests.¹³² Against the opposition of virtually all other participants, China advocated for peaceful nuclear

¹²⁹ Johnston, *Social States*, 127.

¹³⁰ Ibid. Note that contrary to another argument about the timing, China appeared to have dropped its objections to the treaty text before India had made it clear it wouldn’t sign the treaty. See: Swaine and Johnston, ‘China and Arms Control Institutions,’ 107.

¹³¹ Johnston, *Social States*, 130.

¹³² Gill, ‘Two Steps Forward, One Step Back,’ 264.

explosions (PNEs), and for not ceasing testing until the treaty entered into force. As Rebecca Johnson notes, China was “completely isolated” on the PNE issue, and participants in the process were well aware that the entry into force could be years away.¹³³ Yet it was clear, as Shen Dingli said, that “the job of negotiators was to slow negotiations to have more time to test before signing.”¹³⁴ In the context of 1995-96, “China’s initial reluctance to stop testing nuclear weapons and join the CTBT and its continued nuclear and missile transfers further fuelled suspicions that Beijing did not share the norms of the nonproliferation regime.”¹³⁵

Reasons the pressure mattered to Beijing

The heavy criticism of China’s nuclear testing has been documented by Johnston as a factor in China’s final announcement in August 1996 that it would sign the CTBT. However, this chapter has attempted to show that this criticism met its target because China was particularly vulnerable at that time. Faced with the aftermath of Tiananmen, pressure after the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea episodes, and the upsurge in concern about the ‘China threat theory’, China could not dismiss international pressure. This was because the pressure appeared to be directly undermining valued elements of China’s international status: its position as a legitimate nuclear weapons state, and as a leader of the developing world. Bates Gill argues that despite the immediate pressure from non-aligned countries, the signing of the CTBT took place only after those in Beijing most concerned about image and key relationships won out in “a fierce internal debate... [It was] an important step to help bring some greater stability to US-China

¹³³ Rebecca Johnson, *Acronym 7: Indefinite Extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty : Risks and Reckonings : A Report of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference*, New York, 17 April to 12 May 1995 (London: The Acronym Consortium, 1995), 49, 63.

¹³⁴ Shen Dingli, interview with the author, 26 March 2016.

¹³⁵ Zachary S. Davis, ‘The Convergence of Arms Control and Nonproliferation: Vive La Différence,’ *The Nonproliferation Review* 6, no. 3 (1999): 101.

relations following a rocky period between the two countries, especially escalating tensions in 1995-96 over Taiwan.”¹³⁶

Delays in the progress of the CTBT negotiations proved fortuitous in that their conclusion started to fall in line with China’s plans to conclude its testing program. This satisfied the nuclear science community. Li Bin argues that the major program of testing was in this way complete, and the scientific establishment was supportive because it had been given generous resources to compensate for the end of the tests.¹³⁷ With this, China began to become considerably more relaxed and cooperative.¹³⁸ As noted above, Beijing’s decision in principle to sign was probably made in late 1995, and internal debates were settled. As Chinese nuclear expert Fan Jishe comments:

The military wasn’t happy with the CTBT, but people who wanted to be part of the international community prevailed... China was creating its own rules. By the end of the 1990s, nuclear proliferation was no longer an active issue in the China-US relationship.¹³⁹

Thus in September 1996, China was the second country (after the US) to sign the CTBT, despite the limitations the treaty place on its nuclear arsenal.¹⁴⁰ Swaine and Johnston judge that given the technical constraints imposed, and lack of countervailing benefits, “a powerful reason, then, for China’s participating in and acceding to the treaty seems to be a concern about image and status.”¹⁴¹ The result of signing the CTBT was that, by the mid-1990s, China was showing widespread acceptance of non-proliferation norms, and greater institutional capacity to comply with commitments.

¹³⁶ Gill, *Rising Star*, 100.

¹³⁷ Li Bin, interview with the author, 22 March 2016.

¹³⁸ Rebecca Johnson, *Acronym 6: Strengthening the Non-Proliferation Regime: Ends and Beginnings*. (London: The Acronym Consortium, 1995), 40.

¹³⁹ Fan Jishe, interview with the author, 22 March 2016.

¹⁴⁰ Medeiros, *Reluctant Restraint*. Li Bin, interview, 22 March 2016.

¹⁴¹ Swaine and Johnston, 'China and Arms Control Institutions,' 108.

Notes on findings

The experience of the CTBT was that in the post-Tiananmen period, China's attempt at a more forward policy of security assertiveness in 1995-96 "backfired by reinforcing perceptions of an emerging China 'threat' to the region."¹⁴² Instead, Thomas Christensen notes that after the Taiwan Straits crisis, "fear of US encirclement fostered Chinese reassurance of its neighbours."¹⁴³ Because of this, China's elite came to realise that social competition with the United States would only fuel the China threat narrative, causing states to ally against rising China.

As a result, from 1996 China began to outline to a regional audience its "New Security Concept" which repackaged and re-emphasised principles of mutual respect, non-interference and consultation.¹⁴⁴ In the decade after 1996, scholars noted China's evolution from threatening regional hegemony to being a "good neighbour, a constructive partner, a careful listener, and a nonthreatening regional power."¹⁴⁵ This period was dominated by "the fact that the United States did not appear to be in decline (just the opposite), [and] Deng's general thesis was still accurate as an overall assessment of and guide to China's foreign policy."¹⁴⁶

In their essay on China and status-seeking, Larson and Shevchenko argue that the New Security Concept overcomes China's previous difficulties in directly grasping for higher international status. Instead, it is an example of "status creativity", which instead of

¹⁴² Larson and Shevchenko, 'Status Seekers,' 77.

¹⁴³ Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2015), 193.

¹⁴⁴ Shambaugh, *China Goes Global*, 97; Bonnie S. Glaser and Evan S. Medeiros, 'The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy-Making in China: The Ascension and Demise of the Theory of "Peaceful Rise",' *The China Quarterly*, no. 190 (2007): 295.

¹⁴⁵ Shambaugh, 'China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order,' 64.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

challenging the existing order “allows China to claim prestige as a norms entrepreneur.”¹⁴⁷ Larson and Shevchenko contend that, according to social identity theory, a social creativity strategy requires the dominant power’s validation if it is to be successful. Fortunately, they say, Washington provided this from the late 1990s, and they argued that, “Against this backdrop of mutual recognition of status, there is little evidence that China is engaging in social competition with the United States.”¹⁴⁸ This could, however, be contrasted with the period since their paper was published. This has been politely called a period of “assertiveness”, or less diplomatically as a phase of “increasingly tough and truculent” behaviour by Beijing toward its neighbours and the United States.¹⁴⁹

A more useful conclusion from this case study is to break down the findings in the sequence of events. China, concerned about its status going in to the CTBT negotiations, was attempting to trade off the status roles of being both militarily powerful and a legitimate major power. In 1995, it appeared China’s international status was again secure enough to demonstrate military power against Taiwan, but the ensuing crisis revealed that this was premature. At the same time, while China had pursued legitimacy through engagement with the nuclear non-proliferation and arms control regimes, it found that once committed, the legitimacy costs of backsliding on nuclear testing became high. The result was a recalculation in which China accepted the security costs of the CTBT in order to prevent any further cost to its legitimacy. As Deng explains, China has pursued great power status by not only building the material bases for status recognition through power, but also simultaneously boosting China’s

¹⁴⁷ Larson and Shevchenko, ‘Status Seekers,’ 82.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 86.

¹⁴⁹ David Shambaugh, ‘Coping with a Conflicted China,’ *The Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2011): 7. For a critique of the ‘new assertiveness’ debate see: Alastair Iain Johnston, ‘How New and Assertive Is China’s New Assertiveness?’, *International Security* 37, no. 4 (2013); Christensen, *The China Challenge*, 260.

international legitimacy through participation in international society. “Achieving both requires restraining power politics for the sake of cultivating legitimate recognition,” Deng writes.¹⁵⁰ Tolerating the costs of the CTBT was an example of this.

A topic for further investigation is whether additional domestic political factors made this decision easier to make. Not only was China being encouraged by the international community to join the test-ban treaty, but domestic constituencies even including the scientific establishment were in favour, according to Professor Li Bin.¹⁵¹ It may well be that a combination of both internal and external support for a course of action makes a costly status decision easier to make.

Next steps

The extensive literature on China and the CTBT sees status concerns as one factor alongside instrumental interests as a reason for signing the treaty. A specific explanation in the literature is that socialisation in the years leading up to 1996 encouraged Chinese decision-makers to take greater account of the social and normative benefits of signing, against the costs of non-signing. The puzzle addressed by this case study was why decision-makers became sensitive to back-patting and opprobrium at that time. The case study has shown that China engaged in a normal status-seeking phase in which it gradually accepted nonproliferation norms, but at little cost to material values. The Tiananmen crisis is well known, but it appeared the onset of the acute 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis had a particular effect on the timing of China’s decisions. China also felt pressure on its status because, as a participant in the NPT extension process, its status as a legitimate nuclear weapons state demanded that it progress to signing the CTBT. As a

¹⁵⁰ Deng, *China's Struggle for Status*, 39.

¹⁵¹ Li Bin, interview with the author, 22 March 2016.

result, this case study contributes to the existing literature by providing evidence for a three-phased process by which China responded at particular times to a status crisis, through policies to enhance its prestige-building activity.

6. INDIA AND THE POKHRAN II NUCLEAR TESTS, 1998

SECTION A: EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

Introducing the case

From 11 to 13 May 1998, India conducted five nuclear test explosions at the Pokhran site in the Rajasthan desert, and on the day of the last tests, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared India to be a “nuclear weapons state.”¹ The international impact was dramatic, with major economies such as Japan imposing sanctions, and many voices warning of a negative impact upon India’s foreign relations. The United Nations Security Council “strongly deplored” the tests, the Chinese government said the tests showed “outrageous contempt” for the international community, and US President Bill Clinton said: “We’re going to come down on these guys like a ton of bricks.”² It might have been expected that the tests, even if meeting some kind of national security objective, would have jeopardised India’s international reputation. But instead, commentators described the tests as motivated by India’s desire for prestige, given what was deemed India’s “intense grievance over being locked into what it sees as an inferior status” in the nuclear non-proliferation regime.³ The Indian popular press was enthusiastic, giving the impression internationally that, as the *New York Times* put it,

¹ Jaswant Singh, *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2006), 101.

² UNSC: SC/6517 of 14 May 1998, accessed at: <http://www.un.org/press/en/1998/19980514.sc6517.html>; ‘outrageous contempt’: Chinese Foreign Ministry statement of 14 May 1998, cited at <http://www.acronym.org.uk/old/news/india-nuclear-tests-11-13-may-1998?page=show>; Clinton quoted in Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 52.

³ Quote about grievance in: William Walker, ‘International Nuclear Relations after the Indian and Pakistani Test Explosions,’ *International Affairs* 74, no. 3 (1998): 511-12.

India's "pride and psyche" drove the tests.⁴ Indian elite commentators were more reserved, but saw the tests aiming "to see that India is embraced back on the world's centre-stage," and that with greater prestige, India was "prepared to undertake the full responsibilities of a great power."⁵ This began a debate that continues to this day about the role of prestige and status in the nuclear tests.

India's May 1998 nuclear tests make up the third case study of this thesis. Of the three cases, the literature on this event is the most abundant, as the tests have excited scholars of India and of nuclear proliferation alike. As in the preceding chapters, this case is dealt with through a literature review section and an analysis section. In contrast to the other cases, the case deals with sudden and dramatic events that immediately generated a large literature. As a result, a goal of this chapter (especially the literature review section) is to narrow the focus to aspects of the case that answer the research project's major questions about status.

The 1998 tests sit in the context of the wide literature on India's nuclear program. This literature mostly analyses Indian nuclear decision-making through the three main lenses of proliferation theory: national security, domestic political interests and bureaucratic inertia, and the pursuit of prestige.⁶ Despite the breadth of the literature, an overarching puzzle remains surrounding India's incremental and drawn-out process of proliferation. There were gaps of many years between India's first nuclear test in 1974, the probable first construction of nuclear weapons, and the tests and nuclear state declaration in

⁴ Tim Weiner, 'C.I.A. Study Details Failures; Scouring of System Is Urged,' *New York Times*, 3 June 1998.

⁵ Gupta, *The Indian Express*, 13 May 1998 and Mohan, *The Hindu*, 12 May 1998, both quoted in Karsten Frey, *India's Nuclear Bomb and National Security* (London: Routledge, 2006), 136-37.

⁶ For an overview of the wider proliferation literature using this categorisation, see: Gaurav Kampani, 'New Delhi's Long Nuclear Journey,' *International Security* 38, no. 4 (2014): 80.

1998.⁷ The result is that there are multiple contending claims as to the causes of the tests. Attempts at a definitive answer often run into an impasse over whether long-term, short-term or other explanations should be given priority.

This case study starts from the point that there are multiple plausible explanations for the Pokhran II tests. Security, domestic political, and prestige explanations are all relevant. In line with the other chapters, the purpose of this study is narrowly focused on the way status perceptions played a role in the decision. The literature review has two purposes. One is to confirm the selection of the case (as with the other case studies) as one where we are likely to see status playing a role, then to find out what the literature tells us about the role status played. The literature can tell us about beliefs decision-makers had about India's status roles, and as a result which prestige-building efforts were prioritised. Then the second part of the chapter will analyse the case to examine how changing circumstances may have caused change in that pattern of status-seeking.

Outline of events

In the context of India's many decades of nuclear development, this short time line is necessarily selective. The following aspects of the wider history have been chosen in order to highlight one sequence of events in which it appears that perceptions of India's international status played a significant role in decision-making. Points of relevance include the purposes and nature of Indian nuclear development up to the 1990s, the

⁷ See below for discussion of the probable nuclear weapon construction.

effects of the arms control treaties of the mid-1990s, and decisions regarding testing prior to and in 1998.

India's atomic energy research – and just as important for this case study, a strong, centralised nuclear science establishment – can be traced back to the earliest years of independence.⁸ While India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was opposed to acquiring nuclear weapons, the issue demanded increased Indian attention after the 1962 conflict with China, and the latter's first nuclear test in 1964.⁹ This led to a period in which India both explored a nuclear guarantee from the USSR and helped draft the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But dissatisfied with the way the NPT did not advance disarmament by existing nuclear weapons states, India let the treaty enter into force in 1970 without its participation.¹⁰ On 18 May 1974, at the same Pokhran test site as the 1998 tests, India detonated a 15-kiloton nuclear device. The so-called "Smiling Buddha" or "Pokhran I" test was described by New Delhi as a "peaceful nuclear explosion", and indeed India did not follow up the test with rapid proliferation.¹¹ The reasons for this are still debated, but explanations range from Chinese nuclear threats,

⁸ Sumit Ganguly pinpoints the formation of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, under India's father of nuclear research Homi J. Bhabha, two years before independence in 1947. Later Bhabha became head of the Atomic Energy Commission in 1948 and the Department of Atomic Energy in 1954. Frey, *India's Nuclear Bomb and National Security*, 60-61; Sumit Ganguly, 'India's Pathway to Pokhran II: The Prospects and Sources of New Delhi's Nuclear Weapons Program,' *International Security* 23, no. 4 (1999): 149-50.

⁹ Ganguly, 'India's Pathway to Pokhran II,' 154.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 155-58.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 160.

lack of industrial resources and Western non-proliferation pressure,¹² through to concern about economic costs,¹³ foreign pressure,¹⁴ and ethical concerns.¹⁵

While India's scientists were not successful in their lobbying for follow-up tests in the late 1970s and early 1980s,¹⁶ a major change in Indian security circumstances occurred with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, which led to substantial US arms sales to Pakistan.¹⁷ In 1988, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi proposed a plan for global nuclear disarmament, which was rebuffed by the nuclear states.¹⁸ Scholars assess that this setback, the weakening Soviet security guarantee, and intelligence that Pakistan had acquired a number of nuclear devices, caused Gandhi to approve final nuclear weapons development around 1989-90.¹⁹ By 1994, India may have had weapons-grade fissile material for as many as 25 nuclear warheads, with several available for assembly at short notice.²⁰ However, debate continues about the deployability of these devices, with some scholars arguing that an air-delivery capability was not achieved until as late as 1996.²¹ As a result, India's position in the mid-1990s has been called "nuclear opacity" because nuclear weapons existed, but were not openly declared or deployed.²²

¹² Kampani, 'New Delhi's Long Nuclear Journey,' 86.

¹³ Andrew B. Kennedy, 'India's Nuclear Odyssey: Implicit Umbrellas, Diplomatic Disappointments, and the Bomb,' *International Security* 36, no. 2 (2011): 126. Bharat Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons & Indian Security: The Realist Foundations of Strategy* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2002), 263-80.

¹⁴ Ganguly, 'India's Pathway to Pokhran II,' 160-61.

¹⁵ Kennedy points to: George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 6, 74, 77.

¹⁶ K. Subrahmanyam says Indira Gandhi did authorise a test in 1983, but the US detected it and successfully pressured her to defer it. K. Subrahmanyam, 'Indian Nuclear Policy - 1964-98 (a Personal Recollection),' in *Nuclear India*, ed. Jasjit Singh (New Delhi: Knowledge World in association with Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, 1998), 37.

¹⁷ 1999 Ganguly, 'India's Pathway to Pokhran II,' 163.

¹⁸ Jaswant Singh, *Defending India* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 324; For the text of Gandhi's proposal, see: *Address by His Excellency Mr Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India*, Fifteenth Special Session, 9 June 1988.

¹⁹ Ganguly 1999, 165. Kennedy 142-146.

²⁰ Kennedy, 'India's Nuclear Odyssey,' 146; Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 340.

²¹ Kampani, 'New Delhi's Long Nuclear Journey,' 81.

²² Gaurav Kampani draws on Avner Cohen and Benjamin Frankel, "Opaque Nuclear Proliferation," in Benjamin Frankel, ed., *Opaque Nuclear Proliferation: Methodological and Policy Implications* (London:

The mid-1990s became a critical period for the nuclear nonproliferation regime as the expiry of the NPT's 25-year life led to a Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference in April-May 1995. The NPT extension was approved by all but four of the 178 parties to the treaty, without a vote, on 11 May 1995. India was disappointed by this approach, and its October 1995 statement to the UN declared that the NPT's indefinite extension had "legitimized for all time. . . [the] division of the world into nuclear haves and have nots."²³ The passage of the NPT extension also had a significant effect on India's attitudes toward the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Just as it had helped draft the NPT in the 1960s, India had co-sponsored the CTBT with the US in November 1993. However, India was concerned that the Entry Into Force (EIF) provisions of the CTBT, tabled in June 1996, required all 44 nuclear-capable states (so measured for their possession of relevant reactors) to ratify the treaty before it could take effect. India was angered by this, stating that it had the "strongest objections" and that the provision amounted to denying India's sovereign right to voluntary consent on an international treaty.²⁴

Concurrent with the arms control negotiations, India began to perceive increased security threats from China. This took the form of missile shipments to Pakistan, and a Chinese nuclear test explosion only four days after the NPT vote, which India deemed to be highly provocative.²⁵ In late 1995, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao reportedly told Atomic Energy Commission head Rajagopala Chidambaram to prepare for a series

Frank Cass & Co, 1991), 14-18. Cited in Kampani, Gaurav Kampani, 'From Existential to Minimum Deterrence: Explaining India's Decision to Test,' *The Nonproliferation Review* 6, no. 1 (1998): 13-14.

²³ *Statements by India on Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty*, 78, quoted in Mistry 2003, 131

²⁴ UN Document CD/PV.746 (20 August 1996), 7, cited in Mistry, 'The Unrealized Promise of International Institutions,' 133.

²⁵ George Perkovich records that the shipment, believed by the Indian side to consist of about 30 M-11 missiles, further irritated New Delhi because the United States refused to accept it as grounds to impose sanctions on China. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 362.

of nuclear tests.²⁶ Before they could be conducted, however, on 15 December 1995 the Pokhran site preparations were publicly revealed in the *New York Times*.²⁷ Rao opted not to proceed with the tests and was voted out of office in May 1996.

The general election of 1996 resulted in a hung parliament, but the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed a government with A.B. Vajpayee sworn in as Prime Minister on 15 May, subject to securing a parliamentary vote of confidence within two weeks. Vajpayee is reported to have immediately directed nuclear science chiefs to prepare for nuclear tests, and one device was actually lowered into a test shaft. But Vajpayee felt it would be inappropriate to bequeath the implications of the tests to a successor, so he held his order to test until after the confidence vote.²⁸ On 28 May, facing defeat, Vajpayee resigned and was replaced by H.D. Deve Gowda. On nuclear issues, Gowda was initially focused on resisting American pressure on the CTBT and its contentious Entry Into Force provisions, and on 10 September 1996 India voted against the treaty in the United Nations. By early 1997, Gowda was had reportedly given orders for new nuclear test preparations,²⁹ but he was forced to resign in April that year. Gowda was briefly replaced by I.K. Gujral, before Vajpayee's BJP returned to power.

Experts believe that soon after Vajpayee returned to office in March 1998, he again ordered Kalam and Chidambaram to prepare for tests.³⁰ A public pretext for testing also

²⁶ Chengappa 390-91. Sharif's 'announcement' in Nov 1994 (See: Priyanjali Malik, *India's Nuclear Debate : Exceptionalism and the Bomb*, War and International Politics in South Asia (New Delhi ; New York: Routledge, 2010), 160-63.)

²⁷ Tim Weiner, 'U.S. Suspects India Prepares to Conduct Nuclear Test,' *New York Times*, 15 December 1995.

²⁸ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 374-75. This reference is to both the device being lowered into the test shaft, and Vajpayee's decision to await the confidence vote.

²⁹ Chengappa cites "interviews with high-ranked officials". Ibid., 401, 402-03.

³⁰ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 408-09.

existed in the form of a Pakistani nuclear-capable missile test in April 1998.³¹ With preparations this time successfully concealed from US observation, and only five weeks after Vajpayee is believed to have given the order, the tests were successfully carried out on 11 and 13 May 1998. Altogether, India tested thermonuclear, fission and low-yield devices (43, 12, 0.2 kilotons) on 11 May, then two low-yield devices on 13 May, with the tests altogether being known as “Pokhran II.”³²

The tests were followed by diplomatic reproaches and the imposition of sanctions, but also a rapid restoration of relations with the United States. The latter began with a series of talks between Indian defence minister Jaswant Singh and US under-secretary of State Strobe Talbott, and were followed with a visit by President Clinton to New Delhi in March 2000. At around the same time, conflicts and stand-offs between India and Pakistan between 1999 and 2002 – now that both sides were overtly nuclear armed – attracted greatly increased US and global attention.³³ What followed was an incremental process from 2004 under what was known as the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership, followed by the July 2005 US-India nuclear agreement, which declared the process of rapprochement complete.³⁴

³¹ The test was seen as provocative at the time, although Ganguly describes it as mainly important for exemplifying long-term security concerns about both Pakistan and China. Ganguly, ‘India's Pathway to Pokhran II,’ 170-71.

³² Singh, *A Call to Honour*, 101.

³³ Talbott, *Engaging India*, 154-62.

³⁴ Rajiv Sikri, *Challenge and Strategy: Rethinking India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, India; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2009), 173-76.

Existing explanations

Most of the literature about Pokhran II cites reasons of national security, the pursuit of prestige, domestic politics (including party politics and bureaucratic interests), or some combination of the three as the reason for the decision to test.³⁵ This corresponds to the wider literature on nuclear proliferation. As Scott Sagan notes in his study of why states build nuclear weapons:

Nuclear weapons, like other weapons, are more than tools of national security; they are political objects of considerable importance in domestic debates and internal bureaucratic struggles and can also serve as international normative symbols of modernity and identity.³⁶

To put the Indian tests' literature in the wider context of that on nuclear proliferation, the latter distinguishes between states' technical capacity to construct nuclear weapons (the "supply-side") and the motivations of governments to acquire them (the "demand-side"). While initially it was assumed that states that developed the requisite technical capacity would soon seek nuclear weapons, by the late Cold War the literature increasingly focused on the puzzle of why there was such a wide gap between the 50 or so technically nuclear weapons-capable states, and the small number of actual nuclear weapons states.³⁷ India became a perennial subject of interest, because it had demonstrated it could detonate a nuclear device in 1974, yet was not a declared nuclear weapons state until 1998. As such, in the following literature the Indian tests have very much been seen as a case study of wider debates about nuclear proliferation. Status concerns are debated as a possible cause of the tests, just as the former is debated as a driver of proliferation in general. However the 1998 tests have been studied far less as a

³⁵ Dinshaw Mistry, 'The Unrealized Promise of International Institutions: The Test Ban Treaty and India's Nuclear Breakout,' *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (2003): 120.

³⁶ Scott D. Sagan, 'Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?,' *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1996): 55.

³⁷ Scott D. Sagan, 'The Causes of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation,' *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (2011): 226-28.

case study of status perceptions themselves playing a causal role in international relations.

Security explanations

The first explanation of the nuclear tests is that they were intended to enhance India's security, situating the tests as a case study in security explanations of nuclear proliferation. As one essay put it squarely, this explanation holds that "the fundamental motivation to seek a weapon is the perception that national security will be improved."³⁸ These explanations have evolved considerably in the course of the nuclear era. It was initially assumed that those who could acquire the bomb, inevitably would.³⁹ But by the end of the Cold War it was necessary to explain the gap between technical capability and actual nuclear weapons acquisition. A more nuanced view then predicted that states would seek nuclear weapons only on the condition that they faced serious military threats but lacked alliances with a nuclear state.⁴⁰ Scholars argued that nuclear states' extended security guarantees explained why many other states did not seek nuclear weapons of their own.⁴¹ With the end of the Cold War, an implication of this argument was that the decline of superpower rivalry would weaken these guarantees. As one scholar put it at the time, the international system was expected to revert to a "more unvarnished form of anarchy", and "the accelerated proliferation of weapons of mass destruction will be an early and noticeable consequence of this change."⁴²

³⁸ John Deutch, 'The New Nuclear Threat,' *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 4 (1992): 124-25.

³⁹ Peter R. Lavoy, 'Nuclear Myths and the Causes of Nuclear Proliferation,' in *The Proliferation Puzzle : Why Nuclear Weapons Spread (and What Results)*, ed. Zachary S. Davis and Benjamin Frankel (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1993), 194.

⁴⁰ Mistry, 'The Unrealized Promise of International Institutions,' 119 n4.

⁴¹ Benjamin Frankel, 'The Brooding Shadow: Systemic Incentives and Nuclear Weapons Proliferation,' *Security Studies* 2, no. 3-4 (1993): 57.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 37, 57.

National security reasons remain the most prominent explanation in the literature on the Indian tests, whether in accounts by scholars or by Indian policy practitioners. TV Paul notes that for the Indian elite, nuclear weapons represent “hard power”, and he cites the code-name “Shakti”, or “power” given to the testing program.⁴³ Among the key examples, Sumit Ganguly argues that “the evolution of the nuclear program and the 1998 tests were the product of calculated political choices based upon considerations of national security.”⁴⁴ Specifically, Ganguly contends that the long-term security threat from China was “the most compelling underlying factor that drove India’s nuclear weapons program,” while the specific timing in 1998 was driven by the extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and US efforts to conclude a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty.⁴⁵ Even before the tests themselves, K. Subrahmanyam described the “coercive” Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) as “a major deterioration in our security environment” and as a result, “India was compelled to go for nuclear armaments because of Chinese support to the Pakistani nuclear-weapons program and the tacit US connivance of that effort.”⁴⁶

Also referring to the significance of the CTBT, Ashok Kapur argues that the key threats to India in 1998 were the challenge to Indian interests by China’s policies towards both India and Pakistan, Pakistan’s nuclear program, and the US turning a blind eye to Chinese and Pakistani flouting of the nonproliferation regime. But in terms of specific timing, like Subrahmanyam, he calls the CTBT the “straw that broke camel’s back”.⁴⁷

⁴³ T. V. Paul, ‘The Systemic Bases of India’s Challenge to the Global Nuclear Order,’ *The Nonproliferation Review* 6, no. 1 (1998): 4.

⁴⁴ Ganguly, ‘India’s Pathway to Pokhran II,’ 172.

⁴⁵ Sumit Ganguly and Manjeet S. Pardesi, ‘Explaining Sixty Years of India’s Foreign Policy,’ *India Review* 8, no. 1 (2009): 15.

⁴⁶ K. Subrahmanyam, ‘India and the Global Nuclear Order,’ in *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options*, ed. David Cortright and Amitabh Mattoo (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 82.

⁴⁷ Ashok Kapur, *Pokhran and Beyond: India’s Nuclear Behaviour* (New Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 194.

Arguments against the security explanation include the lack of immediate security threats, leaving a puzzle about the timing of the tests, and the argument that declaring nuclear weapons status actually worsened India's security. As Dinshaw Mistry puts it, concerns about China were an important long-term consideration in Indian security – and kept India from joining the NPT, and ensured it maintained its nuclear option – but Sino-Indian relations were improving in 1990s, with confidence-building accords in 1993 and 1996, a strengthening of Indian conventional forces, and a moderation in Beijing's transfer of nuclear technology to Pakistan.⁴⁸ The other side of the coin, Mistry continues, was that India's nuclear declaration may have worsened its security position relative to Pakistan: "Overt nuclearization then negated New Delhi's conventional force edge, enabled Islamabad to obtain strategic parity with India, and gave it greater confidence in its ability to confront India on Kashmir."⁴⁹ Similarly, Gaurav Kampani argues that while India's decision to acquire nuclear weapons (he estimates as early as 1988) aimed to hedge against security threats, in 1998 India's security environment was unchanged from the late 1980s, or even improved.⁵⁰ As he puts it, these arguments "are not meant to dismiss India's security concerns. India has real conflicts with its neighbours. But security concerns were not behind the recent tests."⁵¹ One analysis puts the security issue in a wider context, focusing on New Delhi's concerns about Chinese interference Myanmar, its military activity in Tibet, and its support to Pakistan. The result was that "India's tests were in fact a manifestation of the country's deep-seated rivalry with China, which goes beyond questions of security

⁴⁸ Mistry, 'The Unrealized Promise of International Institutions,' 120-21.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 122.

⁵⁰ Kampani, 'From Existential to Minimum Deterrence,' 16.

⁵¹ Ibid., 13-14. For the 1988 date, see: Raj Chengappa, 'The Bombmakers,' India Today, August 3, 1998 (<http://www.india-today.com>).

per se.”⁵² This is an approach that links security explanations to prestige and status, which are discussed next.

Prestige and status explanations

Taking nuclear proliferation literature generally, many scholars place prestige and normative explanations second after national security as an explanation for states acquiring nuclear weapons.⁵³ As Jacques Hymans puts it, going nuclear is a big decision, and “big decisions are likely to stem from something other than a straightforward material cost-benefit calculation.”⁵⁴ A prevalent prestige-based model for nuclear proliferation is a sociological one, in which nuclear weapons serve a symbolic role meeting national ambitions. For example, McGeorge Bundy notes that the British and French nuclear programs were not ultimately motivated by the need for deterrence, but they wanted “to meet their own standards of their own rank among nations.”⁵⁵ Likewise, Scott Sagan sees nuclear weapons performing a social function as one of the accepted attributes of a “modern” state:

From this sociological perspective, military organizations and their weapons can therefore be envisioned as serving functions similar to those of flags, airlines, and Olympic teams: they are part of what modern states believe they have to possess to be legitimate, modern states.⁵⁶

As nonproliferation has developed as an international norm, however, the question has arisen as to whether nuclear acquisition can still be assumed to be prestigious.⁵⁷ The

⁵² Hilary Synnott, ‘Why Test in 1998?’, *The Adelphi Papers* 39, no. 332 (1999): 14-15.

⁵³ Writing in 1993, Lavoy already put prestige as the second most-cited reason for a state to go nuclear. Lavoy, ‘Nuclear Myths and the Causes of Nuclear Proliferation,’ 197.

⁵⁴ Jacques E. C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 17.

⁵⁵ McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (Random House: 1988): 501, cited in Lavoy, ‘Nuclear Myths and the Causes of Nuclear Proliferation,’ 197-98.

⁵⁶ Sagan, ‘Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?’, 74.

⁵⁷ Lavoy, ‘Nuclear Myths and the Causes of Nuclear Proliferation,’ 198..

sociological approach also may not explain the timing of proliferation, or why many states with an interest in prestige do not necessarily acquire nuclear weapons.

The literature specific to India's 1998 tests frequently uses prestige and status explanations. As the introduction and literature review explained, this thesis distinguishes prestige and status for analytical purposes. However, due to their similar meaning, scholars may use either term and sometimes they are used synonymously. For this project, we are interested in explanations that refer to status-seeking behaviour, which incorporates beliefs that the tests built prestige or influence, or that nuclear weapons are prestigious.

Among the status-related explanations, Karsten Frey contends that India was more interested in the display entailed in its tests than in the full-scale development of a nuclear deterrent, as it was "conceptualizing nuclear weapons as devices to demonstrate national power rather than as elements of military power."⁵⁸ J. Mohan Malik notes "From India's perspective, its nuclear tests have served notice on the international community that the post-World War II, US-led, European-dominated power structure does not truly reflect the diffusion of power in the international system."⁵⁹ And Varun Sahni notes the high level of public opinion support for nuclear tests to "enhance India's international status": "As India gropes its way toward modern nationhood, which implies a modern state and a modern society, the bomb can easily become a proud and seductive symbol of national achievement."⁶⁰ John D Ciorciari writes that the tests were more about India's frustrated aspirations for recognition as a major power: "More about

⁵⁸ Frey, *India's Nuclear Bomb and National Security*, 18.

⁵⁹ Jag Mohan Malik, 'India Goes Nuclear: Rationale, Benefits, Costs and Implications,' *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 20, no. 2 (1998): 201.

⁶⁰ Varun Sahni, 'Going Nuclear: Establishing an Overt Nuclear Weapons Capability,' in *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options*, ed. David Cortright and Amitabh Mattoo (University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 88.

demanding attention and respect than meeting any military necessity, they reflected both India's mounting aspirations and a continuing streak of defiant independence in its foreign policy"⁶¹ Likewise, Jason A. Kirk says that while regional security considerations are crucial, India's nuclear programme "has always been related to its search for recognition and respect in the eyes of the world."⁶² These illustrate the common theme that the nuclear tests were prestigious for India because it hoped to be recognised as a major power. This is well summarised by Kampani, who writes that "[the tests] depended on underlying assumptions that nuclear weapons are a unique key to prestige and influence in international politics, and only by brandishing them openly can a state attain great power status."⁶³

Some critics of prestige explanations simply declare that the structure of the international system trumps other causes. Discussing nuclear proliferation in general, Frankel, for example, states that one can dismiss factors such as domestic politics, psychology, or national culture, because "these factors are secondary to structural incentives."⁶⁴ However, much of the debate over India's nuclear weapons focuses on the perceived constancy of prestige motivations compared with the variable of proliferation. This is encapsulated by Hymans' argument that India and France had "always pursued international prestige, yet their nuclear weapons policies shifted from abstinence to acquisition at a certain moment in time. A constant cannot explain a variable."⁶⁵ Likewise, Ganguly rejects those who explain the decision in terms of "unrequited goals for prestige and status," because:

The tests, it is contended, were designed to confer on India great power status. ...But this argument fails to explain why previous regimes had not taken the same decision. If

⁶¹ John D. Ciorciari, 'India's Approach to Great-Power Status,' *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 35, no. 1 (2011): 73.

⁶² Jason A. Kirk, 'The Evolution of India's Nuclear Policies,' in *India's Foreign Policy: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Sumit Ganguly (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 295.

⁶³ Kampani, 'From Existential to Minimum Deterrence,' 21.

⁶⁴ Frankel, 'The Brooding Shadow,' 37.

⁶⁵ Hymans, 'Why Do States Acquire Nuclear Weapons?,' 143.

India's ebbing prestige had so concerned its elites, the tests should have come much earlier, especially in the waning days of the Cold War, when the country found itself adrift in the international order.⁶⁶

Thus both national security and prestige proponents have evidence for their preferred motivation, yet both motivations have been criticised for failing to explain the timing of the 1998 tests.

Domestic political explanations

The third main body of literature on the tests explains them in terms of the literature of nuclear proliferation caused by domestic political factors. This is typically attributed either to the influence of scientific and bureaucratic lobbies and elites, or to domestic party politics and public opinion. The bureaucratic approach was typified by Morton Halperin's 1974 observation that government officials "often develop their position largely by calculating the national interest in terms of the organisational interests of the career service to which they belong."⁶⁷ The approach is conceptualised by Graham Allison as 'Model III' of foreign policy making (the other two being the 'rational actor model' and the 'organisational process model') in which policies emerge from struggles, competition and bargaining between bureaucratic players.⁶⁸ A good deal of literature also deals with the influence of party politics on foreign policy. Key influences include Robert Putnam's analysis of 'two-level games', Gourevitch's study of domestic influences, and Solingen on nuclear proliferation itself.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ganguly, 'India's Pathway to Pokhran II,' 174.

⁶⁷ Morton H. Halperin, Priscilla Clapp, and Arnold Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, The Brookings Institution, 1974), 62.

⁶⁸ See: Christopher M. Jones, 'Bureaucratic Politics and Organizational Process Models,' in *The International Studies Encyclopedia* (Blackwell Publishing, 2010).

⁶⁹ See: Robert D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,' *International Organization* 42, no. Summer 1988 (1988); Peter Gourevitch, 'The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics,' *International Organization* 32, no. 4 (1978); Etel Solingen, 'The Political Economy of Nuclear Restraint,' *International Security* 19, no. 2 (1994).

In the case of the 1998 tests, writers such as George Perkovich and Itty Abraham exemplify the ‘strategic enclave’ hypothesis. For Abraham, the progress of India’s nuclear program has represented the rise of ruling cliques within the Atomic Energy Commission, shows off “the virtuosity of Indian scientists”, and is a way for the “postcolonial state” to demonstrate its ability to modernise the country.⁷⁰ George Perkovich similarly points to the earlier 1974 test as more based on “intuition, bureaucratic and technological momentum” and personal calculations of a Prime Minister under political pressure.⁷¹ The other face of domestic politics is party politics. Some argue that these are a key explanation, giving the tests to the BJP’s ideological vision and domestic political priorities. This explains the puzzle of why the Congress Party did not test earlier.⁷²

An additional domestic politics explanation is advanced by Hymans, who rejects national security, prestige, and bureaucratic explanations for all failing to explain the timing of the tests. Instead, he argues that a specific psychological explanation that he calls “oppositional nationalism” was a driving force. Hymans argues that some national leaders see their state inevitably at odds with others, but also conceive the fundamental identity of the state as having a special role or standing in the international system.⁷³ To explain why the BJP under Vajpayee was so certain in its decision to go ahead and test, he says Vajpayee and the BJP’s oppositional nationalism “provided it with the emotional motivation to embrace what earlier governments had deferred or shunned,”

⁷⁰ Itty Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb : Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State*, Postcolonial Encounters (London; New York: Zed Books, 1998), 149-50.

⁷¹ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 178.

⁷² Kanti P. Bajpai, 'The BJP and the Bomb,' in *Inside Nuclear South Asia*, ed. Scott D. Sagan (Stanford University Press, 2009), 40-42.

⁷³ Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*, 18-20.

and, as a result, “not mere prestige-seeking, not bureaucratic politics, but a combination of fear and pride on the part of top leaders drives nuclear weapons decisions.”⁷⁴

Domestic politics explanations have also been criticised, especially on the grounds that the nuclear program spanned decades – far too long a term for the tests to be determined by the BJP’s election. Ganguly, for example, accepts that the BJP made its decision for chauvinistic reasons, but points out that the BJP also inherited a long-running scientific program, and was responding to long-term security threats which at the time were highlighted by a provocative Pakistani missile test.⁷⁵ In downplaying the causal significance of Vajpayee’s election, other scholars emphasise that successive Indian governments had declined to join the NPT,⁷⁶ and the previous Congress Party government had come close to testing under Narasimha Rao.⁷⁷ Likewise, Dinshaw Mistry sees Vajpayee’s decisions reflecting the elite view that “India’s nuclear program was a sign of technological prowess, prestige and great-power status, and thus the BJP’s desire for recognition of India as a nuclear weapons state simply reflects this long standing perspective.”⁷⁸ Andrew Kennedy adds that even though the nuclear tests are associated with BJP’s return to power, “India’s disappointments on the diplomatic front had undermined the rationale for restraint even among India’s other parties.”⁷⁹ Hymans also criticises the bureaucratic explanation from the party politics perspective: Despite the existence of an Indian ‘bomb lobby’ since 1964, Indian leaders maintained that non-weaponisation was best not only for security but for India’s international standing.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Hymans, 'Why Do States Acquire Nuclear Weapons?,' 151, 153.

⁷⁵ Ganguly, 'India's Pathway to Pokhran II,' 173.

⁷⁶ Kapur, *Pokhran and Beyond*, 3.

⁷⁷ Kirk, 'The Evolution of India's Nuclear Policies,' 287-88.

⁷⁸ Dinshaw Mistry, *India and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty* (Champaign, IL: ACDIS, 1998), 43.

⁷⁹ Kennedy, 'India's Nuclear Odyssey,' 150.

⁸⁰ Hymans, 'Why Do States Acquire Nuclear Weapons?,' 144.

Assessment of the literature

Prestige and status appear with frequency in the literature on the 1998 tests, and at one level this is adequate reason to select this case as a “most likely” example of status playing a causal role in foreign policy decisions. The literature alone, however, does not provide much guidance on how to begin to study status’ role. Many of the prestige-related accounts above assume that nuclear weapons are symbolic of major power status, so India conducted the nuclear tests in order to cloak itself in such symbols. More information than this is necessary to carry out an analysis of status’ role. This is partly because simply stating that nuclearisation is prestigious does little to answer the timing question. It is also because the literature about the tests does not tell us enough about what value India placed on prestige, or indeed what constituted valuable prestige for India. We need this in order to judge the extent that prestige and status may have played causal roles, compared with other causes such as national security. To counter this, it is worth reviewing broader literature about Indian status-seeking. This helps us identify the kind of prestige and status that India sought, and what value was placed upon them.

Several aspects of India’s beliefs about status help to explain the importance of prestige and status in the nuclear tests. First, India had a strong belief that, based on its historical, cultural, and demographic significance, it would eventually achieve recognition as a great power. Second, India’s history ensured that its pursuit of status would have unique qualities: among these, were the belief in maintaining national autonomy, and a strong normative aspect to foreign policy. Third, atomic research was important to both of these aspects. On the one hand, a nuclear research program

(including its civilian aspects) kept open the door to future great power status. On the other, nuclear weapons might not only provide material security, but also maintain India's political autonomy. At the same time, normative aspects of nuclear arms control were also important. For India, normative concerns could both slow down nuclear development, yet also make international arms control efforts an especially sensitive political concern. These factors combine to paint a picture of India's status concerns at the time of the case study.

India's aspirations to great power status

Indian beliefs about a special status for the country can be traced at least to the political traditions established with the struggle for independence. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote that "it will be well for the world if India can make her influence felt."⁸¹ He came to power with the central belief that India had "special rights and duties in the management of international society based on its status as one of the world's major civilisations."⁸² Nehruvianism remains the mainstream current of Indian international thought, encompassing a belief in essential national unity, independence from other states, and "the belief that the greatness of Indian civilisation must and will eventually be recognised by others."⁸³ One of Nehru's core beliefs was that India could play a significant role promoting international cooperation, and could establish new international norms.

John D. Ciorciari notes four reasons for India seeking major power status: ensuring policy autonomy (which as noted above, has reflected India's post-colonial status);

⁸¹ Nehru, *Discovery of India*, cited in Singh, *A Call to Honour*, 46-47.

⁸² Chris Ogden, 'International 'Aspirations' of a Rising Power,' in *Handbook of India's International Relations*, ed. David Scott (London: Routledge, 2011), 4-5.

⁸³ Hall, 'The Persistence of Nehruvianism in India's Strategic Culture,' 148.

maintaining security from internal and external threats; raising living standards; and winning diplomatic recognition as a leading nation – as Vajpayee put it, securing “a meaningful role in world affairs.”⁸⁴ The last element is a distinctive aspect of Indian foreign policy. Stephen Cohen notes: “Whether a realist or idealist, almost every member of the Indian strategic community thinks that India’s inherent greatness as a power is itself a valuable diplomatic asset, and that others must become cognisant of the moral quality of Indian foreign and strategic policy.”⁸⁵ Indian scholars observe that from Nehru’s time on, Indian international thinking has continued to emphasise normative as well as material bases of power. “Then and to some extent, even now, India tended to place an inordinate amount of importance on attaining international status. In turn, India still seems to place a good deal of stock on its ‘power by example’ as a way of gaining global status.”⁸⁶ In other words, the consistent theme is a combination of material and moral power. India’s aspirations to major power status are based on both: “Its capacity to utilise power directly; and its capacity to shape the rules and institutions through which states interact in important ways.”⁸⁷

Autonomy and non-alignment

The principle of autonomy and non-alignment has been a central debate in Indian international thinking. This was not only thanks to Nehru’s personal beliefs in multilateralism and global transformation, the legacy of Gandhi, and India’s national

⁸⁴ Atal Bihari Vajpayee, “India Tomorrow: Building an Indian Century,” Address to the India Today Conclave 2004, December 3, 2004, quoted in: Ciorciari, ‘India’s Approach to Great-Power Status,’ 63-64.

⁸⁵ Stephen P. Cohen, *India : Emerging Power* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 62.

⁸⁶ Deepa M Ollapally and Rajesh Rajagopalan, ‘India: Foreign Policy Perspectives of an Ambiguous Power,’ in *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers : Domestic Foreign Policy Debates in China, India, Iran, Japan and Russia*, ed. Henry R. Nau and Deepa M. Ollapally (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 79.

⁸⁷ Rajesh M. Basrur, ‘India: A Major Power in the Making,’ in *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics: Global and Regional Perspectives*, ed. Thomas J. Volgy, et al. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 191.

experience of colonialism, but also because of the structural factor that nonalignment would allow a relatively weak state such as India to play a greater than expected role internationally.⁸⁸ Related to this was the belief that India could not align its fate with any one power. In Nehru's words, it was: "Not a wise policy to put all our eggs in one basket...purely from the point of view of opportunism...an independent policy is the best."⁸⁹ As other scholars note: "to join any of the two superpower blocs was seen as mortgaging India's eventual emergence as a future major player."⁹⁰

Nevertheless, Nehru's successors were criticised for uncritically adopting superficial aspects of the doctrine, especially an excessive reliance on idealism in foreign policy. The criticism fuelled alternative strains of Indian international thought, including moves to merge Western realpolitik with Indian traditions, and a championing of the Hindu nationalist outlook on international relations.⁹¹ From the realpolitik perspective, some Indian scholars saw India's 1962 defeat by China as evidence that India had ignored the constraints of power politics "to pursue an explicitly ideational foreign policy... with mostly disastrous consequences."⁹² Meanwhile, nationalists such as Jaswant Singh have claimed that far from Nehruvianism boosting India's international role, "what it did confer as a legacy was ambivalence, ambiguities, and an uncertain and apprehension-filled future."⁹³ The implication of this criticism is that post-Cold War moves to strategic autonomy, and indeed the acquisition of nuclear weapons, marked a major change.

⁸⁸ Sumit Ganguly, 'The Genesis of Nonalignment,' in *India's Foreign Policy: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Sumit Ganguly (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1-2. There were also non-status related reasons for non-alignment, especially to reduce the economic burden of defence, and also to avoid the militarisation of Indian society or the risk of a military takeover. See: Ganguly & Mukherji 2011, 14.

⁸⁹ Nehru: *India's foreign policy: selected speeches*. (Government of India 1961). Quoted in Raghavan 2010, 20

⁹⁰ Nayar and Paul, *India in the World Order*, 157.

⁹¹ Hall in Tellis 2016, 148-49

⁹² Ganguly and Pardesi, 'Explaining Sixty Years of India's Foreign Policy,' 4

⁹³ Singh, *Defending India*, 39

Despite the criticism, a strong case can be made that Nehru's more genuine legacy is a close alignment of power and values in Indian thinking. Nehru himself had been keenly aware of India's power position. Andrew Kennedy explains that "because he anticipated that India would be a relatively weak power after it became independent, [Nehru] believed that it would need to pacify its environment through an active diplomacy that promoted military restraint and disarmament."⁹⁴ This is not, however, to imply hypocrisy in Nehru's normative values. While Nehru genuinely supported such apparently idealistic goals as supporting the United Nations, non-alignment, and disarmament, this cannot be separated from his pursuit of the national interest — seeking the resources of the UN to assist national development, avoiding entrapment in superpower rivalries, and believing disarmament would constrain India's rivals⁹⁵. Srinath Raghavan adds: "His (Nehru's) commitment to norms of international behaviour stemmed not from an airy idealism but from a shrewd understanding that power should never be divorced from legitimacy."⁹⁶

Nuclear science

Along with great power aspirations and national autonomy, nuclear energy has played an important role in Indian understandings of its international status. In both its civilian and military applications, nuclear research represents an overlap of national interests in security and status. The ability to field a nuclear deterrent in itself was symbolic of

⁹⁴ Andrew B. Kennedy, *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru: National Efficacy Beliefs and the Making of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 143. A similar point is made by: Sunil Khilnani, 'Asia's Exceptional Nation,' *Wilson Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2000): 44.

⁹⁵ See: Andrew B. Kennedy, 'Nehru's Foreign Policy: Realism and Idealism Conjoined,' in *The Oxford Handbook on Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁹⁶ Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India: A Strategic History of the Nehru Years*, Indian Century (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010), 320.

major power aspirations. At the same time, if nuclear weapons provided security benefits, this would also contribute to India's autonomy, which in turn was a pre-requisite of its status. Possibly a way to understand the importance of nuclear weapons is to see them as a quality, like autonomy, that was commensurate with recognition for major power status. This means it is important to distinguish between the possession of a nuclear research program, which achieved status ambitions in certain ways, from the 1998 nuclear test decision, which achieved related but distinct status goals.

Nuclear research has long symbolised India's independence, national purpose, and modernity. Itty Abraham has written that nuclear energy programs provide legitimacy to a post-colonial state, and for decades it has been vital to Indian perceptions of national prestige: "Atomic energy was national strength, uniqueness, and security all wrapped up in one package."⁹⁷ Gaurav Kampani, who sees a broadly realist explanation for India seeking weapons for security reasons, argues that in reality organisational and technical difficulties, especially those due to the need for such secrecy, caused significant delays in the tests.⁹⁸ But despite those organisational failings, as Kampani puts it: "For conservative Hindu politicians, nuclear weapons are a muscular symbol of an increasingly assertive and resurgent Hindu society."⁹⁹ Above all, they were in train from the earliest days. Tests marked continuation of longstanding policies, "set in motion from almost the earliest years of independence."¹⁰⁰ Nuclear research was also important to confirming and protecting the key value of autonomy, which in turn helped guarantee India's right to seek major power status. Stephen Cohen argues that whatever pro-testing advocates have said about the principled qualities of an Indian weapons program, "their primary perspective is that these devices bring status, power and

⁹⁷ Abraham in Sagan 2009, 122

⁹⁸ Kampani, 'New Delhi's Long Nuclear Journey,' 110-11.

⁹⁹ Gaurav Kampani, 'In Praise of Indifference toward India's Bomb,' *Orbis* 45, no. 2 (2001): 244.

¹⁰⁰ Singh 1999, 326

military capability to India vis a vis its neighbours and other states, especially the United States.”¹⁰¹

Indian perceptions of nuclear weapons reflect the literature about nuclear proliferation. As Ashley Tellis notes of nuclear arms, “their mere presence may suffice to express threats, convey signals, enlarge freedom of action, and bestow psychological advantages on their possessors.”¹⁰² For India to abdicate its nuclear role, would make it dependent on policies of others, limit its freedom of policy action, and could limit its choice of allies, he adds. Tellis concludes that the nuclear focus is “a function of New Delhi’s perceptions of India’s size and potential power, which, taken together, reinforce its basic beliefs about the country’s greatness and claims to recognition... Since the beginning of modernity, great-power status in the international system has been defined primarily by a state’s possession of comprehensive military capabilities, which today include, among other things, the possession of nuclear weapons.”¹⁰³ All in all, to renounce nuclear weapons would be to renounce any claim to global pre-eminence.

Putting these together, as Priyanjali Malik says, nuclear assets help define a political image: “India’s atomic arsenal defends a certain idea of India — that of a modern, independent but above all, sovereign state occupying a position of global influence on the international stage.”¹⁰⁴ It also allowed India to demonstrate security self-reliance, commensurate with being a major power. The nuclear tests, in turn, have been described as Nehruvian as they let a weak India maintain its autonomy in the face of Chinese or US threats; they bought time for economic and military reforms; and for all their

¹⁰¹ Stephen P. Cohen, 'Why Did India "Go Nuclear"?', in *India's Nuclear Security*, ed. Raju GC Thomas and Amit Gupta (Boulder, Colo.: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2000), 19.

¹⁰² Ashley J. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2001), 150.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 151, 153.

¹⁰⁴ Hall, 'The Persistence of Nehruvianism in India's Strategic Culture,' 2.

provocation they also demonstrated considerable policy restraint.¹⁰⁵ The factor that we are going to look at is the timing of the tests, and the interaction of external pressures on existing Indian beliefs. For India, as George Tanham pointed out, “external recognition and validation of India’s place” is almost as important as actually having the material attributes or roles that would underpin high status.¹⁰⁶

Several writers also note that security and prestige explanations are intertwined and often indistinguishable. There is a basis in the proliferation literature for this, as Stephen Meyer argued that prestige and political power were a single reason states sought nuclear weapons. “A country may pursue its nuclear option to enhance its status and position in the eyes of other countries... the belief that such weapons somehow magnify a nation’s image.”¹⁰⁷ Baldev Nayar and TV Paul write that the 1998 tests were conducted for security reasons, but also for an underlying reason: “The enduring and deep-rooted aspiration of India for the role of a major power, and the related belief that the possession of an independent nuclear capability is an essential prerequisite for achieving that status.”¹⁰⁸

Gaps and next steps

This review of the literature on the case has shown that prestige and status have been frequently cited as reasons for the 1998 nuclear tests, but a significant gap remain because the literature is inconclusive about the role status played in the episode. Putting

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 159-60.

¹⁰⁶ George K. Tanham, *Indian Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1992), 60.

¹⁰⁷ Stephen M. Meyer, *The Dynamics of Nuclear Proliferation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 46.

¹⁰⁸ Nayar and Paul, *India in the World Order*, 3.

the test literature in the context of the wider literature about Indian status ambitions helps to better understand the kinds of prestige and status that were being sought. Longstanding beliefs in India about the country maintaining its independence and eventually emerging as a major power underpin the several status roles that India has pursued since independence. This helps show a degree of consistency in Indian international thinking from Nehru to Vajpayee, as India has pursued status roles such as non-aligned leader, strategically autonomous actor, technically advanced state, and moral leader. From this we can see that India was likely to allocate resources to prestige-building projects ensuring autonomy, demonstrating technical prowess, and burnishing normative credentials. The simultaneous pursuit of a nuclear program and advocating for arms control in international forums are examples of how this prestige-building would be carried out.

The findings of this survey of the literature provide a useful starting point for an analysis of the case. A key point is the contradiction inherent in India's status goals. Even from the start of the nuclear era, but compounded by the development of nonproliferation norms, the pursuit of nuclear weapons conflicted with maintaining recognition as a moral exemplar. Raghavan's analysis of Nehru, as noted above, is valuable, as it highlights that for India power and legitimacy have always been intertwined. The importance of this is that it means that any analysis of Indian status-seeking must be about trade-offs. At times India's pursuit of a nuclear program would be traded off against strengthening its normative authority, and vice-versa. The analysis of this case will therefore very much be about the factors that would cause one prestige-building track to be favoured over another. This is an approach that may also help to fill that outstanding puzzle of the case, the timing of the nuclear tests.

SECTION B: CASE ANALYSIS

Analysing the case

The 1998 nuclear tests still generate intense emotions among India's close-knit foreign policy establishment.¹⁰⁹ Former officials will fiercely defend the decision to test, and they express a range of reasons for it. But they frequently place a conspicuous emphasis on a defensive aspect, according to which India was forced to conduct the tests to resist what they recall as barely disguised international coercion. For example, India's former ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Sheel Kant Sharma, says of the tests that "we were not going to be bullied or pushed around... They felt India wouldn't have the guts to do it [but] it took two tests to show it was no mistake. Thus far and no more!"¹¹⁰ This recurrent theme suggests that even if we accept from the literature that status and prestige were one likely factor in the tests, there appears to be a process in action that made them especially important factors in 1998. Analysing the way status concerns might have become more sensitive at a particular time is the starting point for this case analysis.

The review of the literature provides a starting point for this analysis. The review concluded with the observation that Indian status-seeking involved the pursuit of several status roles, often simultaneously, such as normative exemplar, leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, regional hegemon, and prospective great power. Prestige could be built pragmatically along parallel tracks and these status goals did not need to conflict.

¹⁰⁹ The term "close-knit" runs the risk of cliché, but it was notable in the course of fieldwork how readily discussions with interviewees would lead to introductions to other experts of relevance. Not only civilian officials but retired military officers and even journalists all appeared to be in close contact with each other.

¹¹⁰ Sheel Kant Sharma, interview with the author, 13 September 2016.

This demands, however, policies of moderation on any one track, and this can at once be seen in the slow time line of India's nuclear development. In line with this approach, a key turning point for India's nuclear program was likely to be developments that disrupted this set of trade-offs in Indian status-seeking. A major focus of this analysis is therefore the point where perceived pressure from the mid-1990s arms control treaties was judged by New Delhi to make the defence of independence and autonomy outweigh longstanding normative status goals.

The three-phase process of status-seeking that is used in each of the case studies of this project appears to be particularly pronounced in the Indian case. As noted, India was balancing a variety of status roles, and at the time of the case was holding open its aspirations to major power status, while keeping normative leadership as a major goal as well. This compromise suggests that a phase of normal status-seeking would involve a cautious and incremental advances on controversial matters such as the nuclear program. This caution would keep the gateway open to nuclearisation, assumed to be a quality of future major-power status, but would equally postpone risky decisions such as openly declaring the nuclear capability. The phase of status crisis was triggered when arms control treaties threatened to deprive India of prestige commensurate with its self-perceived status as a regional power and potential major power. This ensured that in the third phase, an enhanced drive to acquire prestige overcame concerns about the risks of the tests. Indeed, the following section will show that India was pushed into testing despite the risks, not in pursuit of the benefits.

Normal status seeking: India's pre-crisis pattern of behaviour

Up to the mid-1990s, Indian status-seeking continued the broad pattern observed throughout its post-independence history. India pursued a number of status roles relatively consistently, and leaders in New Delhi continued to identify avenues for building prestige that would reinforce those roles. Even as roles as post-colonial, moral, or non-aligned world leader lessened in priority as Indian foreign policy was marked by a greater public emphasis on realism, India did not deviate from its role as an aspirant great power. A representative scholarly view is that, “for India, these aspirations have been based upon a consensus of ensuring India’s emergence as a Great Power that is fully autonomous, influential, and respected in the global comity of nations.”¹¹¹

However a colourful snapshot of the view was given in a remark by retired senior diplomat Kanwal Sibal, who said, “When we say we want to be a first-rank power, it’s more in the sense of not being treated as a second-rank power.”¹¹² This comment may sound offhand or contradictory, but it captures the standpoint of many Indian officials. It implies that the overarching goal is to maintain the open door to major power status, rather than a specific vision of major power status itself. As this section sets out, many elements of Indian policy built strands of prestige that would help ensure India could gain recognition as such a prospective major power.

In the leadup to 1998, India pursued a normal phase of prestige-building marked by continuity with its post-independence history. India continued to value independence as a key to its international relations, even as the favoured terminology shifted from “non-alignment” to “strategic autonomy”. Alongside this, notions of moral prestige remained important to Indian policy calculations. These policies were steadily pursued even as

¹¹¹ Ogden, 'International 'Aspirations' of a Rising Power,' 3.

¹¹² Kanwal Sibal, interview with the author, 13 September 2016.

India faced greater pressure on its security after the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

Despite this mounting pressure, India maintained an incremental approach to its nuclear policy, which progressed consistently as the country took into account gradual changes in security conditions. The crisis of status would come in the middle of the 1990s, and would disrupt this steady progress of prestige-building.

Elements of prestige building

In the leadup to 1998, key elements of Indian foreign policy remained consistent. These included international relations based on a balance of pragmatic autonomy and moral legitimacy; elements that have typically been much more complementary than contradictory. A key to assessing these objectives is that they are both intersubjectively defined, requiring recognition by other states in order to carry any weight. This has meant that for India, considerations of security and status are closely intertwined. Assets for national security can help ensure the autonomy of India's foreign policy, which is considered important to status, while recognition as a major power, or at least as an aspirant thereto, helps India's perceptions of security. As a result of this, nuclear weapons are a part of both India's status and security. In addition, autonomy is an especially important goal, because of the colonial legacy, and the belief that Indian culture and destiny require it.

The current views of Indian elites indicate a continued belief that positions such as non-alignment or support for disarmament have both normative and pragmatic aspects. For example, a nationalist such as Jaswant Singh accepts that non-alignment was "an appropriate response which gave India the needed flexibility."¹¹³ Hawkish retired

¹¹³ Singh, *Defending India*, 32.

official Rajiv Sikri says that: “What is insufficiently appreciated: is that strategic autonomy or non-alignment was not about equidistance but about taking decisions on our own.”¹¹⁴ Former Foreign Secretary Lalit Mansingh declared that prior to the nuclear tests, “there was a conviction we couldn’t trust anyone to help us... [You need] recognition of the total isolation of India - there is no great power that is going to help us when we need them. We are not going to give up our autonomy and enter alliances.”¹¹⁵ Similarly, Kanwal Sibal noted that “we are a big country, and we have a very old civilisation and culture, therefore we cannot be an appendage of anyone.” Autonomy was closely linked with the idea of eventual recognition as a major power, as it was a prerequisite for future great power goals as well as being a good in itself. This helps us understand that by the 1990s, power and values combined remained the core of Indian international thought.

The nuclear program during normal prestige-building

While a national nuclear weapons program is an inherently risky and costly venture, it may still be compatible with a state’s normal phase of prestige-building. The main way this is possible is if the program remains bounded by defined cost and risk parameters – defined in the sense that a state only pays costs for its prestige commensurate with the value of relevant status goals, but not so much that it impinges on other goods that the state may wish to enjoy. This is very much exemplified by Aabha Dixit’s observation that for New Delhi, status was consistently a national priority, but was equally consistently balanced against cost and risk calculations: “Indian public opinion wanted

¹¹⁴ Rajiv Sikri, interview with the author, 10 September 2016.

¹¹⁵ Lalit Mansingh, interview with the author, 8 September 2016.

to see the nuclear weapon as part of the country's 'prestige', but this attitude was tempered by a sense of realism over the potential economic costs of such a policy.”¹¹⁶

In line with this approach, the Indian nuclear program remained cautious even after China's nuclear test of 1964. It was not solely rhetoric to call the May 1974 “Smiling Buddha” nuclear test a “peaceful nuclear explosion.”¹¹⁷ While some Indian officials described the device as a weapon,¹¹⁸ it was likely it was unwieldy and far from deliverable as a bomb.¹¹⁹ In any event, India was still far short of a fully weaponised nuclear program.¹²⁰ Indian attitudes toward acquiring its own deterrent were characterised by serious concern about the costs. This is summarised by former Indian Foreign Secretary Salman Haider, who emphasised that in the years between 1974 and 1998 New Delhi decision-makers did not assess the costs of a changing India's posture to rely on nuclear weapons would be justifiable. “It was deliberately decided we didn't want to pay a heavy economic price, nor change our defence strategy by integrating a nuclear deterrent,” he says.¹²¹

In addition to balancing the material costs of the nuclear program, any prestige gained from the program also had to be balanced against the concurrent value of legitimacy. This also demanded a highly conservative cost and risk appraisal of nuclear initiatives. Simultaneous with a nuclear program, India had continued to build up prestige in areas that would reinforce recognition of the country as a normative or moral leader. In the

¹¹⁶ Aabha Dixit, 'Status Quo: Maintaining Nuclear Ambiguity,' in *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options*, ed. David Cortright and Amitabh Mattoo (University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 59-60.

¹¹⁷ Ganguly, 'India's Pathway to Pokhran II,' 160.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Kennedy 2011, 125. See: Gaurav Kampani, “From Existential to Minimum Deterrence: Explaining India's Decision to Test,” *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Fall 1998), p. 14; Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 183; and Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security*, p. 324.

¹²⁰ See Kampani, 'New Delhi's Long Nuclear Journey.'

¹²¹ Salman Haider, interview with the author, 14 September 2016.

republic's early years, Nehru had recognised that its relative weakness could be offset by diplomacy promoting peace and disarmament, alongside decolonisation.¹²² An unexpected outcome was that this emphasis on disarmament had an important influence on India's decisions to acquire nuclear weapons of its own. This was first hinted at after the 1974 test, when Indira Gandhi cited India's strenuous efforts for disarmament as one reason the country was dissatisfied with the NPT.¹²³

The continued policy of nuclear gradualism is well illustrated by major Indian nuclear decisions in the 1980s, some of which are recounted in a first-hand account by former senior official and high-profile strategic commentator K. Subrahmanyam.¹²⁴ After the first major publications in India about the Pakistani nuclear program in 1979, and the US arms sales to Islamabad that followed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, there were demands for the Indian government to publicly respond. Subrahmanyam writes that in 1983, Indira Gandhi ordered preparations for another nuclear test. However, this was detected by US satellites and after pressure from Washington, Gandhi cancelled the plans.¹²⁵ A notable aspect of this is that the decision was that at the time Indian scientists had been encouraging Gandhi to test a more advanced boosted fission device.¹²⁶ Not testing it meant that India would forego another prestige aspect of the nuclear program – the chance to demonstrate technical leadership in the developing world. While the 1974 Pokhran I test had been seen as a key example of this, it was conspicuous that India did not follow this with demonstrations of more advanced nuclear devices. As Benjamin Frankel says of the 1974 test, "The benefits of

¹²² Kennedy, *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru*, 143; Stephen P. Cohen, 'India Rising,' *The Wilson Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2000): 44.

¹²³ David Cortright and Amitabh Mattoo, *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 61.

¹²⁴ Subrahmanyam, 'Indian Nuclear Policy.'

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Raj Chengappa, interview with the author, 9 September 2016.

demonstrating India's technical ability were garnered, and India's willingness to defend its nonaligned status was demonstrated."¹²⁷ It was therefore not urgent for India to take the risk of further tests to demonstrate greater technical capabilities.

Another instance of gradualism was visible in 1987, when security concerns about Pakistan reached crisis level during the "Brasstacks" military standoff.¹²⁸ Pakistani nuclear scientist AQ Khan gave an interview that was widely interpreted as signalling Islamabad's possession of nuclear weapons.¹²⁹ Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who took office after the assassination of his mother in 1984, chose not to escalate the situation. Instead, he appointed officials associated with peaceful atomic energy research, promoted a nuclear test-ban treaty, and at the UN in 1988, he launched his Rajiv Gandhi Plan for comprehensive nuclear disarmament. Mansingh recalls that at the time, the "moral stance" was still an important counterweight to the nuclear "enclave" and those others in New Delhi who urged testing. Mansingh notes considerable disappointment in New Delhi when Gandhi tried to gain international support "but found nobody was interested."¹³⁰ The rejection by the established nuclear powers was a "bitter disappointment" to Gandhi, Subrahmanyam writes.¹³¹ Gandhi then gave the green light for final weapons development around 1989-90.¹³² This represents a key step forward in the nuclear program, but it was also a measured response compared with

¹²⁷ Frankel, 'The Brooding Shadow,' 54.

¹²⁸ For an account of this crisis, see: Kanti P. Bajpai, *Brasstacks and Beyond : Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995).

¹²⁹ Subrahmanyam, 'Indian Nuclear Policy,' 42.

¹³⁰ Lalit Mansingh, interview with the author, 8 September 2016.

¹³¹ Subrahmanyam, 'Indian Nuclear Policy,' 43-44.

¹³² Ganguly, 'India's Pathway to Pokhran II,' 165; Kennedy, 'India's Nuclear Odyssey,' 142-46.

options such as further nuclear explosions or an open declaration of India as a nuclear weapons state.

Subrahmanyam argues that India then played for time until about 1994, when a number of nuclear devices may have been weaponised, and nuclear testing was feasible.¹³³ Even after the 1990 Kargil crisis, India did not opt to test, even as it continued its weaponisation efforts.¹³⁴ Overt assembly and declaration of nuclear weapons was avoided, partly, Perkovich argues, because the countervailing effect of India's moral and cultural ambivalence towards them.¹³⁵ An end result of this was that up until 1998, India had kept its nuclear options open. Gradual nuclear development was kept separate from any decision to test weapons and declare the formal status of being a nuclear weapons state. The final step in the process was when India, which had been an initial sponsor of the NPT and the CTBT, faced disappointing outcomes in both treaties in the 1990s.

¹³³ Subrahmanyam, 'Indian Nuclear Policy,' 47.

¹³⁴ Kampani strongly argues that India showed restraint during the 1990 crisis not for normative or prestige reasons, but largely because deliverable nuclear weapons were not yet available. Kampani, 'New Delhi's Long Nuclear Journey.'

¹³⁵ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 317.

The status crisis: India reacts to arms control treaties

The status crisis described here was a sequence of events in which challenged India's status aspirations, and threatened to undo the steady process of prestige-building. This challenge came to a head in the form of the mid-1990s nuclear arms control processes. These had a profound effect because India was already in a vulnerable position but the treaties, including the 1995 extension of the NPT and the 1996 CTBT, appeared to New Delhi to be so intrusive that India would be unable to gain recognition as a major power. This chapter therefore outlines Indian perceptions about the international environment; its expectations regarding the arms control treaties; and its beliefs after those treaties were negotiated.

The situation leading up to the tests

By the mid-1990s, India felt vulnerable in terms of both its security and its prestige. Over the course of several years, India had seen its Soviet security guarantees weaken as the Gorbachev regime sought détente with China; the withdrawal from Afghanistan improved Soviet-Pakistani ties; and faced with Pakistani nuclear advances, from around March 1989 Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had approved nuclear weapon production.¹³⁶ Likewise, Prime Minister Vajpayee had described India's "deteriorating security environment", likely referring to China aiding Pakistan, militarising Tibet, aiding Myanmar, and being courted by Washington.¹³⁷ As K. Subrahmanyam put it: "India was compelled to go for nuclear armaments because of Chinese support to the Pakistani nuclear-weapons program and the tacit US connivance of that effort."¹³⁸ However,

¹³⁶ Kennedy, 'India's Nuclear Odyssey,' 142-43.

¹³⁷ Malik, 'India Goes Nuclear,' 199.

¹³⁸ Subrahmanyam, 'India and the Global Nuclear Order,' 199.

debate continues about whether India's actual security situation worsened at this time. Stephen Cohen proposes that India's strategic situation is better seen as fluctuating, and any deterioration from New Delhi's perspective was mostly only relative to excessive Indian optimism about the end of the Cold War. "If a disadvantaged security situation was the critical factor, then India should have tested much earlier than 1998," Cohen argues.

Alongside security concerns, many factors combined to cause New Delhi decision-makers to perceive an ongoing decline in India's prestige. This feeling was particularly acute because India had held high hopes for the post-Cold War world, believing a new world order of multipolarity would emerge, with India to play a major role. Instead, it faced the decline of the Non-Aligned Movement, its credibility undermined by the intractable Kashmir conflict, and a glaring lack of leverage in Washington.¹³⁹ As one former Foreign Secretary noted: "Our leverage in the global political power play is limited and our options are getting increasingly narrower."¹⁴⁰ Pratap Bhanu Mehta saw it as a "quiet, but evident, crisis of confidence", writing in 1998:

The last two decades have been trying ones for India. A spate of secessionist movements, a widespread sense of declining importance in world affairs, and a realisation that many of its highest hopes remain substantially unredeemed have underscored India's insecurities and vulnerabilities.¹⁴¹

George Perkovich adds to the above list the serious economic and social concerns that preoccupied New Delhi at the start of the 1990s.¹⁴² But it is important that neither security nor prestige concerns can solely explain the timing of the nuclear tests. They, along with the other factors, are best considered as establishing the environment of vulnerability which allowed India's status aspirations to be threatened.

¹³⁹ Cohen, 'Why Did India "Go Nuclear"?', 22-23.

¹⁴⁰ Muchkund Dubey, "India's foreign policy in an evolving global order", *International Studies* (New Delhi) 30, no 2 (1993), p. 124, quoted in Malik, *India's Nuclear Debate*, 129.

¹⁴¹ Pratap Bhanu Mehta, 'India: The Nuclear Politics of Self-Esteem,' *Current History* 97, no. 623 (1998): 404.

¹⁴² Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 318-19.

The onset of the arms control treaties

Amid the security and status concerns noted above, the early 1990s renewal of nuclear nonproliferation negotiations came at a difficult time for India. India had helped draft the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty, but had refused to sign due to its dissatisfaction that the nuclear powers neither agreed to share peaceful nuclear technology, nor commit to disarmament. In addition, commentators such as K. Subrahmanyam argued that “although India's argument was couched in moral terms, a more pragmatic consideration—namely, keeping its nuclear weapons option open—guided its decision not to sign the treaty.”¹⁴³ India both expected to play its moral role on this issue, and had strong expectations that the established nuclear powers would reciprocate with their nuclear technology. Instead, the setback was that the NPT constrained only non-weapons states such as India, but did nothing to constrain the established nuclear powers.¹⁴⁴

The critical timing for the nuclear nonproliferation regime arrived as the expiry of the NPT's 25-year life led to the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference held in New York in April and May 1995. For India, the leadup to the conference was marked by missed opportunities and disappointments. In early 1994, the Clinton administration had proposed a new agreement controlling production of fissile material and missile deployments, overseen by the major powers in combination with India and Pakistan. Talks between new Prime Minister Rao and US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott were promising, with suggestions that the American position

¹⁴³ Ganguly, 'India's Pathway to Pokhran II.', 158, citing K. Subrahmanyam, "India: Keeping the Option Open," in Robert M. Lawrence and Joel Larus, eds., *Nuclear Proliferation: Phase II* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1973).

¹⁴⁴ Kennedy, 'India's Nuclear Odyssey,' 127.

indicated “a willingness to live with India’s nuclear weapon capability and not actively seek a rollback in the foreseeable future.” However, India’s scientific establishment pushed back hard, scuttling the option.¹⁴⁵ India also lobbied the Non-Aligned Movement in favour of an NPT extension including time-bound disarmament commitments from the nuclear powers. But a conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Bandung in April 1995 gave India little comfort, as many NAM states stood to benefit from nonproliferation, if it prevented regional arms races, and perceived India as motivated less by their interests as by its self-interest in maintaining freedom of manoeuvre.¹⁴⁶ Facing this, and not wanting to lose support for other key goals in the UN, India chose not to fight the extension process.¹⁴⁷

The NPT extension was approved by all but four of the 178 parties to the treaty, without a vote, on 11 May 1995. India was left disappointed by the approach taken in the consensus “Principles” adopted by the NPT conference.¹⁴⁸ These left India isolated and under more pressure over international demands to ban nuclear tests and further fissile material production.¹⁴⁹ The result followed heavy lobbying by the Permanent Five for the indefinite extension, which reflected the way the conference was dominated by the Five’s security interests. Indeed, one study observed that the conference “demonstrated yet again that on vital national security issues, the ‘realist’ or power politics paradigm still reigns supreme.”¹⁵⁰ India’s October 1995 statement to the UN declared that the NPT’s indefinite extension had “legitimized for all time. . . [the]

¹⁴⁵ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 341-5.

¹⁴⁶ This was at a preliminary meeting, not to be confused with the NAM summit in Cartagena later that year. See: ‘Why Test in 1998?’, *The Adelphi Papers* 39, no. 332 (1999): 22.

¹⁴⁷ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 360.

¹⁴⁸ The Principles and Objectives included: completion of a CTBT no later than 1996, a fissile material convention, and the “determined pursuit” of nuclear arms reductions. Mistry, *India and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty*, 13.

¹⁴⁹ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 358-59.

¹⁵⁰ Tariq Rauf and Rebecca Johnson, ‘After the Npt's Indefinite Extension: The Future of the Global Nonproliferation Regime,’ *The Nonproliferation Review* 3, no. 1 (1995): 32.

division of the world into nuclear haves and have nots,” and that this was a “serious development that is bound to impact on all disarmament negotiations.”¹⁵¹ As Jaswant Singh put it: “The forcing of an unconditional and indefinite extension of the NPT on the international community made 1995 a watershed in the evolution of the South Asian situation. India was left with no option but to go in for overt nuclear weaponisation.”¹⁵² Ganguly adds that India felt serious security concerns due to foreign inspection regimes, as a result of the US achieving its goal of NPT extension: “The US success came as a dramatic shock to the Indian security policy establishment, which now realized that India would come under acute pressure to sign the NPT or at least to agree to full-scope safeguards on its nuclear power plants, including those of indigenous origin.”¹⁵³ A further implication of the NPT extension was that it left the CTBT as India’s only remaining chance for a legally binding arms control commitment.¹⁵⁴ India’s Foreign Secretary at the time, Salman Haider, said: “We felt the NPT was directed at us in many ways. We were excluded, pushed into a secondary position.”¹⁵⁵ Ganguly notes that as New Delhi reflected on its impotence at the NPT conference, and considered the upcoming CTBT: “It is reasonable to infer that the Indian government believed that its window of opportunity was rapidly closing.”¹⁵⁶

In a parallel with the way it had helped draft the NPT in the 1960s, India had co-sponsored the CTBT with the US in November 1993, but the extension of the NPT left India with a change of heart.¹⁵⁷ This was partly due to the bitterness over the ‘haves and have-nots’ inequity in the NPT, but also because the NPT extension brought the CTBT

¹⁵¹ *Statements by India on Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty*, 78, quoted in Mistry 2003, 131

¹⁵² Jaswant Singh, ‘Against Nuclear Apartheid,’ *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 5 (1998): 44.

¹⁵³ Ganguly, ‘India’s Pathway to Pokhran II,’ 167-68.

¹⁵⁴ Dinshaw Mistry, ‘The Unrealized Promise of International Institutions: The Test Ban Treaty and India’s Nuclear Breakout,’ *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (2003): 131.

¹⁵⁵ Salman Haider, interview with the author, 14 September 2016.

¹⁵⁶ Ganguly 1999, 168

¹⁵⁷ Malik, *India’s Nuclear Debate*, 176-77.

on in 1996, much quicker than India had expected.¹⁵⁸ Most concerning for India was that the formula for the Entry Into Force (EIF) provision of the CTBT was tabled in June 1996, requiring all 44 nuclear-capable states (so measured for their possession of relevant reactors) to ratify the treaty before it could take effect. India was furious over this, stating that it had the “strongest objections” and that the provision amounted to denying India’s sovereign right to voluntary consent on an international treaty.¹⁵⁹

The logic of India’s objection to the EIF provisions was that it was forced into a corner, unable to withdraw from the process without vetoing the entire treaty. The only remaining options for India were to sign, leaving itself open to foreign inspectors and (as it saw it) espionage; to not sign, and likely suffer sanctions mobilised by the international community against ‘rogue states’;¹⁶⁰ or to reject the process entirely by testing. From the perspective of Indian officials, maintaining an undeclared nuclear capability was running out of credibility. As the senior Indian diplomat and negotiator Sheel Kant Sharma put it, “the so-called recessed deterrent was a phoney construct to cover up an inability to do anything.”¹⁶¹

In addition to the EIF provisions, some specific aspects of the CTBT concerned decision-makers in New Delhi. One assessment of the treaty’s impact is given by a former Indian arms control negotiator and strategic commentator, Ambassador Rakesh Sood. Sood recalls that by 1996 there were serious security concerns in New Delhi due to China’s delivery to Pakistan of M9 and M11 missiles, as well as manufacturing facilities for further weaponisation. This, he judged, indicated a large improvement in

¹⁵⁸ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 361.

¹⁵⁹ UN Document CD/PV.746 (20 August 1996), 7, cited in Mistry, 'The Unrealized Promise of International Institutions,' 133.

¹⁶⁰ Kapur, *Pokhran and Beyond*, 188.

¹⁶¹ Sheel Kant Sharma, interview with the author, 13 September 2016.

Pakistan's delivery capability at the time. But a larger factor, he recalls, were the CTBT negotiations, and particularly the definition of scope. He argues that the definition of 'comprehensive' as zero-yield would have the greatest effect on non-testing states such as India. With New Delhi perceiving itself to be unable to sign the treaty due to its Entry Into Force provisions, Sood recalls: "This made it apparent across the whole of the political leadership in India that things were coming to a pass, and a decision was inevitable, and sooner rather than later."¹⁶²

As the CTBT loomed, Indian elites began to consider the impact of being relegated to the status of lesser relative power. For example, Karsten Frey has tracked a sharp change in the debate within the Indian elite, as few discussions of nuclear weapons in the 1996-98 period were primarily concerned with security; the majority were about the country's perceived status as an emerging power, relations with the US, and the nonproliferation regime as a vehicle for both. "In the period between 1996 and 1998, two-thirds of all nuclear-related analyses drafted by the strategic elite deplored the negative effects of the international regime for India's status," Frey writes.¹⁶³ Indeed, as one study puts it, if New Delhi is unable to gain recognition as a major power, "China is likely to view India's power position with contempt and continue to treat it as a power equivalent to Pakistan, while placing itself in the category of major powers with special rights to involve itself in the management of South Asian security affairs."¹⁶⁴ This is echoed by a former Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, who said: "There was a feeling it was absolutely the last opportunity for India, and we must not miss the bus. It

¹⁶² Rakesh Sood, interview by the author, 11 September, 2016.

¹⁶³ Frey, *India's Nuclear Bomb and National Security*, 125.

¹⁶⁴ Baldev Raj Nayar and T. V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major Power Status*, Contemporary South Asia (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 230.

[the CTBT] was relegating us permanently to a second degree power status. We would be a second rate power.”¹⁶⁵

Deepa Ollapally calls the situation “a moment of reckoning for India”: “The logical corollary was that if India did not take the drastic step of testing at that critical juncture, the long-held nuclear option would no longer be a real option.”¹⁶⁶ Ashok Kapur sees the CTBT as the “final straw which broke the camel’s back”, alongside other straws such as the Chinese and Pakistani strategic threats and apparent US tolerance of their conniving in nuclear proliferation.¹⁶⁷ It was also important at that time that India’s economy had recovered and, aside from generally making the nuclear program more affordable, the threat of international economic sanctions was less acute than it had been even in 1996.¹⁶⁸ India’s Foreign Secretary at the time, Salman Haider, said simply: “The EIF gave us no option, and the result was we had to veto the process, which is never comfortable.”¹⁶⁹

Implications of the treaties

What this section has shown is that India by the early 1990s was sensitive to threats to both its security and its prestige. While one response to the security situation was likely to have been the decision by 1990 to develop nuclear weapons, neither security nor prestige considerations by themselves explain the timing of the nuclear tests in 1998. However, India’s impotence in the face of the NPT extension, combined with the imminent arrival of the CTBT, left the country facing what it saw as a rapidly closing

¹⁶⁵ Kanwal Sibal, interview with the author, 13 September 2016.

¹⁶⁶ Ollapally, 'Mixed Motives in India's Search for Nuclear Status,' 933.

¹⁶⁷ Kapur, *Pokhran and Beyond*, 194.

¹⁶⁸ This was referenced by Dipankar Banerjee, 8 September 2016, Lalit Mansingh, 8 September 2016, and Raj Chengappa, 9 September 2016.

¹⁶⁹ Salman Haider, interview with the author, 14 September 2016.

window of opportunity. Decision-makers at the time were keenly aware that the situation was becoming a final chance for action for India, and they were equally aware that a relegation to low status would leave India vulnerable to both China and the United States. This leaves us set to examine what action India did take in response to this crisis.

A number of key lessons can be observed in the effects of the arms control treaties on India. First was the way in which they imposed unusually severe time pressure on India. The statements by interviewees that a “window” was closing highlight the way that the treaties inadvertently left New Delhi with perceptions that its responses had to be urgent. This is an interesting case of a status crisis precipitating sudden action from what had been a steady, long-term process.

Another lesson of the case is the way the crisis served a functional, information-disclosing process. The way that the NPT was extended left India with little confidence in the international nuclear regime. It showed that the existing nuclear powers would pay low costs for the regime, while India would pay a high cost. The negotiations over the CTBT only reinforced this. The CTBT revealed that India’s existing, incremental policy would no longer be effective. It forced a functional reassessment of existing policies. In particular, it showed that the costs of inaction had become very high. India faced the prospect of becoming an international pariah, or facing inspections that would carry severe penalties. With the costs of not acting now revealed as high, it became a far more attractive proposition to break with the system. This is what is described in the next section.

Enhanced status seeking: The nuclear tests

This section aims to show that status concerns were an important factor in the decision to test, and not peripheral to other explanations such as national security. Specifically, this section aims to show that status concerns were more pressing in terms of timing than national security considerations or other explanations appearing in the existing literature. The mechanism in play was that status considerations helped to overcome the sense of risk about the tests – India was pushed into testing despite the risks, not in pursuit of the benefits. In addition, this section addresses domestic political explanations. The argument is that the pro-testing policies of the BJP and Prime Minister Vajpayee's personal decision to test were the result of the above factors. In this sense, the key variable remains status, rather than Indian domestic politics.

Rao nearly tests

India's decision came in stages, as the impact of the arms control treaties began to be felt, and decision-makers gradually shifted their calculus on the desirability of the tests. As late as May 1994, Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao held a cordial meeting with US President Clinton, in which the US promised its help to stop the supply of Chinese missiles to Pakistan, and offered nonproliferation inducements such as major investments in India by US firms.¹⁷⁰ But matters moved to a new stage after the May 1995 NPT extension resolution. As well as the impact of the NPT decision, India perceived increased security pressure from China. This took the form of missile shipments to Pakistan, and a nuclear test explosion only four days after the NPT vote, which was taken as an indication that the nuclear weapons states would exploit their

¹⁷⁰ Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace : The Secret Story of India's Quest to Be a Nuclear Power* (New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, India, 2000), 388.

status to the full and “load their arsenals over the rest of the world.”¹⁷¹ In late 1995, Rao summoned Atomic Energy Commission head Rajagopala Chidambaram and told him to prepare for a series of tests, including both hydrogen bomb and sub-kiloton devices.¹⁷²

By August 1995, the Pokhran test site was being prepared – indicating Rao had continued his general indication to scientists to proceed with testing – but Perkovich assesses Rao’s mind was not finally made up, and during late autumn 1995, the main factors in a test decision remained the domestic political calculus.¹⁷³ However, as Rao delayed, on 15 December 1995 the Pokhran site preparations were publicly revealed in the *New York Times*.¹⁷⁴ The United States brought great pressure to bear, and Rao’s feelings were that he had to wait until the economy improved.¹⁷⁵ The perception in New Delhi was that, so soon after the economic crisis of the early 1990s, the threat of US economic sanctions was considerable.¹⁷⁶ The implication was that in Rao’s mind, testing would not meet the risk-benefit equation. Rao opted not to proceed with the tests and had little time to reconsider, as he was voted out of office in May 1996.

The view of first-hand participants of the 1995 period were revealing. Rao was not known as a decisive prime minister, and indeed the crisis might have been avoided had he accepted the Clinton compromise in 1994. However, participants were clear that urgency about testing emerged after the NPT decision. The Chinese nuclear test of 15 May 1995 was telling. It made no difference to India’s security situation, other than

¹⁷¹ George Perkovich records that the shipment, believed by the Indian side to consist of about 30 M-11 missiles, further irritated New Delhi because the United States refused to accept it as grounds to impose sanctions on China. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 362.

¹⁷² Chengappa 390-91. Sharif’s ‘announcement’ in Nov 1994 (See: Malik, *India's Nuclear Debate*, 160-63.)

¹⁷³ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 365.

¹⁷⁴ Weiner, "U.S. Suspects India Prepares to Conduct Nuclear Test."

¹⁷⁵ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 365-70.

¹⁷⁶ The then foreign secretary, Salman Haider, recalled a briefing stating that the cost to India of sanctions could be 1 to 2 per cent of GDP for several years. (Interview with the author, 14 September 2016.)

telling India that China would test at a rapid rate right up until a test ban treaty was ready to sign. But it did send a message that China considered itself in a separate class of country – as a legitimate nuclear weapons state it would take full advantage of its privileges under the NPT: privileges not available to India, and a class distinction that was now extended in perpetuity. The approach of Rao was also important: Rao had become conscious of an important value to India of testing, and ordered preparations for this reason. But against this, Rao was also continually weighing cost-benefit equations. One Indian insider argues that in contrast to his predecessor, “He (Rao) could not stand up to US pressures, even though carrying out a test would be popular and help boost his image.”¹⁷⁷ By the time the preparations were exposed in December 1995, the tests were firmly on the table but the costs were still too high to go ahead.

The CTBT and the transitional period

As the arms control treaties were being finalised, it was possible to observe a greater range of views from New Delhi calling for a sharp break with the past, rather than a continuation of cautious and incremental policies. While the immediate timing of the tests was influenced by the leader in office – with Vajpayee’s BJP more hawkish than other parties – external factors drove the consensus that started to develop in New Delhi about testing. The pressure was mounting as experts argued that India had to test for technical and demonstrative reasons, before the test ban came into effect, after which tests would be difficult or impossible. Former Cabinet Secretary Naresh Chandra recalled that he was urging the government to test while France and China were still doing so, because “we would be in good company – or bad company – and thus we would get through.”¹⁷⁸ As Indian expert Brahma Chellaney argued, the feeling was

¹⁷⁷ Dipankar Banerjee, interview with the author, 8 September 2016.

¹⁷⁸ Naresh Chandra, interview with the author, 7 September 2016.

growing that to wait any longer would be to surrender the “long held holy cow” of a nuclear capability.¹⁷⁹ But at this crucial time, India was presented with a period of political instability, leading to decision-making inertia. Vajpayee replaced Rao as Prime Minister but after just two weeks, on 1 June 1996, was forced to resign due to a parliamentary vote of no-confidence.

The two years of transition showed a transformation in Indian cost-benefit analyses of nuclear tests. As this chapter’s time line set out, in May 1996, Vajpayee was briefed on testing options and gave approval in principle, but officials considered it impossible to follow-through without approval from his successor. After Vajpayee was forced to step aside, the ensuing period of transition did not see any decision by Gowda or his successor in turn, I.K. Gujral. In his detailed account of events, Raj Chengappa reports that Gowda was briefed very early about the nuclear program. However, and reflecting the well-established attitude of caution, Gowda and his ministers gave more weight to the economy and poverty reduction policies, and so opted to wait and see how the CTBT negotiations proceeded.¹⁸⁰ Gujral, then External Affairs Minister, even told Gowda nuclear tests would be “unbearable for our economy and the social infrastructure,”¹⁸¹ and made a similar statement to US Secretary of State Warren Christopher in July 1996. However, Gujral also warned Christopher that “with the test ban treaty proceeding rapidly towards fruition without respecting India’s concerns”, India was running out of options.¹⁸² Facing US pressure over the CTBT’s Entry Into Force provisions, Gowda built a consensus in parliament to pull out of the treaty, and on 10 September 1996 voted against it in the UN. “India’s decision meant that sooner

¹⁷⁹ Brahma Chellaney quoted in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 371.

¹⁸⁰ Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, 397-98.

¹⁸¹ I. K. Gujral, *Matters of Discretion : An Autobiography* (New Delhi: Hay House Publishers (India), 2011).

¹⁸² Raj Chengappa interview with Gujral, 26 April 1998 and 10 April 1999. In Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, 399.

rather than later it had to shed its nuclear ambiguity,” Chengappa notes. By March 1997, “Gowda appeared to have decided to go ahead with a test as a major diversion from his woes,” and gave the nuclear enclave the go-ahead to dig new test shafts.¹⁸³

In April 1997, Gowda was forced to resign and Gujral sworn in in his place. Gujral was against nuclear testing, but not averse to displaying strength through forward missile deployments, and made some attempts at negotiations with Washington. In a September 1997 meeting with President Clinton, Gujral “hinted that India could play ball on the CTBT if the US would make it worthwhile. Apart from major technology tie-ups, Gujral was looking for India to be made permanent member of the Security Council.” Gujral later told Chengappa: “When we enter the UN, this eye sees a signboard hung up outside the Security Council which says: You can come in only if you have the money or a bomb.”¹⁸⁴ This raised the intriguing possibility that Gujral wished to swap the prestige of a nuclear weapons capability for the prestige of a permanent Security Council seat. But before the idea could be explored, in early 1998 Gujral’s premiership was then cut short, as his government was reduced to a parliamentary minority.¹⁸⁵

The BJP victory and the decision to test

With the BJP’s election victory of March 1998, Vajpayee returned to office having stood on an explicit platform of nuclear testing. Some experts believe Vajpayee’s determination was strengthened because he had made concessions on many policy issues, so he was under pressure to show that he could fulfil at least one plank of the

¹⁸³ Chengappa cites “interviews with high-ranked officials”. Ibid., 401, 402-03.

¹⁸⁴ Chengappa interview with Gujral, 10 April 1999 cited in *ibid.*, 408. The discussion of a UNSC seat is also recorded in Andrew B. Kennedy’s record of interview with Gujral on 25 January 2004 (personal correspondence with the author).

¹⁸⁵ For a sense of the very low possibility that India could have received a permanent UNSC seat in a short time frame, see the Japan chapter of this thesis.

party platform.¹⁸⁶ However, by early 1998 a number of factors had come into alignment: the Indian economy had stabilised (reducing the perceived threat of sanctions), while the international community lacked clarity, clearing some of the obstacles that previously hindered a firm decision.¹⁸⁷ Nicola Horsburgh, for example, writes that in the late 1990s, “momentum in arms control and non-proliferation began to stall” especially as concern mounted in Washington about possible nuclear threats.¹⁸⁸ In addition, many experts emphasise that the tests were a result of preparation and support across political party lines, not just due to the BJP election platform.¹⁸⁹ A public pretext for the testing existed in the form of a Pakistani nuclear-capable missile test in April 1998.¹⁹⁰ However, former Indian officials recall that while there were convenient pretexts, India had become more accepting of the costs of testing, now that the price of not testing was becoming more and more apparent.

In this case study, two ways that we can observe enhanced status-seeking in action are the distinct prioritisation of India’s autonomy as a status goal, compared with normative roles, and in a noticeably changed cost-benefit calculation about testing. These are both direct results of the way that the status crisis delivered new information that crystallised new beliefs about status-seeking.

The prioritisation of strategic autonomy over normative roles is a telling example of the hardening consensus in favour of testing. It is possible to observe that India’s long-term commitment to a role as moral exemplar became sharply diminished once the arms

¹⁸⁶ Cohen, 'Why Did India "Go Nuclear"?', 28.

¹⁸⁷ Raj Chengappa, interview with the author, 9 September 2016.

¹⁸⁸ Horsburgh, *China and Global Nuclear Order*, 15. The US Senate would go on to reject the CTBT in October 1999.

¹⁸⁹ Both Naresh Chandra and Rakesh Sood made this point.

¹⁹⁰ The test was seen as provocative at the time, although Ganguly describes it as mainly important for exemplifying long-term security concerns about both Pakistan and China. Ganguly, 'India's Pathway to Pokhran II,' 170-71.

control treaties imposed a serious threat toward the goal of autonomy. Raj Chengappa emphasised that by 1998, the tests enjoyed consensus support “across the political spectrum.”¹⁹¹ Stephen Cohen explains that while Indian elites held a long-term distaste of nuclear weapons, the NPT extension and the CTBT were perceived as so hypocritical that these elites shifted the burden of moral opprobrium to the established nuclear states.¹⁹² In a telling example, Cohen refers to the dramatic change in attitudes of Vajpayee’s Defence Minister, George Fernandes. Cohen recounts that Fernandes had been anti-nuclear his entire career, right up until the parliamentary debate on the CTBT in July 1996. But the formulation of the CTBT was unthinkable threatening to almost all Indian security experts whose chief goal, Cohen writes, “was to retain the option, not to exercise it or abandon it.” While Fernandes was morally opposed to nuclear weapons “the pressure from the five nuclear ‘haves’ was even more obnoxious,” Cohen observes.¹⁹³ It was argued above that the need to balance concurrent status goals ensured that prestige-building toward any one goal would always be moderated by the others. With this balance upturned, India moved rapidly toward a sharp break with the past by taking the risk of testing.

Alongside the shift in the balance of status goals, the enhanced status-seeking phase was characterised by a new cost-benefit analysis of the tests. Indian experts widely observed that the arms control treaties had dramatically increased the cost of inaction on testing. Encapsulating the view, C. Raja Mohan notes that India “was paying a price already - so it was worth putting a little more pressure to win your place in the international system.”¹⁹⁴ Former senior security official Leela K Ponappa said the question for India was “How are you perceived? If you don’t have a security capacity you are perceived

¹⁹¹ Raj Chengappa, interview with the author, 9 September 2016.

¹⁹² Cohen, ‘Why Did India “Go Nuclear”?’ 19-20.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 23.

¹⁹⁴ C. Raja Mohan, interview with the author, 22 July 2016.

differently.” Status was relevant “not in a simple sense of prestige,” but “[India’s] self-image and the way others perceived India was the common strand” leading to the decision to test. She added: “From the 1980s, the perception was a country the size of India must have its economic capacity, and also its security and defence capacity, and the nuclear tests were a part of that.”¹⁹⁵ Lalit Mansingh said about India before and after the tests: “If we hadn’t tested we’d be a much more modest power; a B-grade version of Japan.”¹⁹⁶

That the three large nuclear explosions took place on 11 May 1998 was significant, as it was three years to the day since the much-resented indefinite extension of the NPT. The course of events after the test of 11 and 13 May 1998 were also of relevance, because they continued to demonstrate the parameters of the enhanced status-seeking phase. Rakesh Sood noted that the testing decision was important “in terms of national self-perception, it changed the perception [of India] from being a country with the ‘option’, to a country with nuclear weapons. It became something like drawing a line.”¹⁹⁷ In addition, Rajiv Sikri mentioned that while Vajpayee had demonstrated “political will and the willingness to take risks”, his moratorium on further tests “showed Vajpayee wanted to make a point but didn’t want the situation to escalate or get out of control.”¹⁹⁸ These were useful indications that even the enhanced status-seeking period did not mean an unlimited appetite for risk. Decisions were still being taken on a cost-benefit basis, simply one that accepted more risk compared with the situation before the crisis.

¹⁹⁵ Leela Ponappa, interview with the author, 12 September 2016.

¹⁹⁶ Lalit Mansingh, interview with the author, 8 September 2016.

¹⁹⁷ Rakesh Sood, interview with the author, 11 September 2016.

¹⁹⁸ Rajiv Sikri, interview with the author, 10 September 2016.

Notes on findings

A key finding of this case study is that crises of status have an effect on status calculations which can be quite different from that predicted by the existing literature on status in IR. The reason for this can be seen in a summary of the case. In this episode, perceptions of the impact of the arms control treaties, especially the entry into force provisions of the CTBT, led New Delhi to revalue the prestige qualities of nuclear weapons. As noted above, the CTBT in particular was perceived as so unreasonable that normative or moral opposition to testing diminished. As a result, relatively speaking, a decision to test would no longer carry such a high cost to India's concurrent ambitions of being a moral leader in world politics. In the second effect of the crisis, the entry into force of the CTBT was perceived as carrying a high cost, which would be borne by India even if it did not test. Again, even if nuclear testing continued to carry the risk of international sanctions, their relative cost was reduced when compared with what had been revealed about the cost of inaction.

This pattern of events led to specific outcomes. Prime Minister Vajpayee conducted the nuclear tests, but then declared a moratorium on further testing. India proved to be highly receptive to negotiations with Washington and while the international security environment was conducive, both sides moved rapidly to the 2005 bilateral nuclear security agreement. To a degree, the tests represented a continuation of Nehruvian pragmatism: an abrupt break with international expectations at the time, but in fact allowing India to protect longstanding status aspirations. After the tests, these aspirations remained alive, and India turned from a protester to a supporter of the global

nuclear order, and power and legitimacy remained intertwined at the centre of Indian international relations.

The above summary indicates that a status crisis leads to a phase of new status-related calculations, but not a complete overturning of the basis for the state's status-seeking. For India, the crisis forced a move to more abrupt and assertive status-seeking, but once this was done, India could be seen returning to a similar course to its previous, "normal" status-seeking phase. This marks a significant difference from existing literature that assumes that states that seek higher status recognition may instigate conflict.¹⁹⁹ The example of 1998 shows that even a case study of nuclear weapons does not indicate that status dissatisfaction need be translated into international conflict. Rather, a dissatisfied state may take more assertive and costly policy decisions, but these decisions are still assessed within a defined risk and return framework.

Next steps

The literature on this case extensively canvasses status and prestige, national security, and domestic political explanations for the Pokhran II tests, yet remains at an impasse over which explanations should be favoured. The case analysis aimed to cut through this by addressing puzzles around how status concerns influenced policy decisions, particularly around the timing of the tests. The findings showed that India did conduct its status-seeking in a normal, cautious phase, balancing not only costs and benefits of prestige-building policies, but also balancing different kinds of status ambitions. The status crisis around the arms control treaties not only forced a revaluation of costs and benefits, but also narrowed Indian status-seeking to concentrate on the sphere of

¹⁹⁹ This is assessed in the literature review chapter. See: Renshon, 'Status Deficits and War.'

national autonomy. The result was an abrupt phase of enhanced prestige-building in the form of the decision to test. It was notable that with the status goal achieved, prestige-building returned to a more normal pattern. This concludes three case studies, each of which have shown a pattern of status-seeking in which states have reacted to status crises in ways that meet their unique status ambitions. The following conclusion brings together these findings, considers the puzzles and literature gaps and whether they have been addressed, and considers areas for future research.

7. CONCLUSION

Results of the project

This project began by asking how and when status acts as a variable in policy outcomes. It couched that question in the context of contemporary global power shifts, which are undermining old certainties and making relative status an increasingly important question in IR. Status is particularly important because it is so frequently raised as a possible cause of conflict in this uncertain world order. The thesis aimed to provide a more operationalised causal chain between perceptions of status and policy outcomes. In pursuing this more fine-grained approach, the thesis looked to the role of status as a variable, to compare status perceptions with other causal factors, and to examine case studies in the Asian region, arguably the epicentre of today's power transition.

The core finding of this project in a nutshell is that the causal variable is a change in status perceptions brought on by a status crisis. Decision-makers perceive the crisis as a threat to status recognition, so they then shift their assessments to accept bolder policies to protect their status ambitions.

To outline the findings in more detail, the thesis outlined a three-phase approach to understanding status concerns. In the normal status-seeking phase, leaders have identified the status roles their country should pursue, and effort is allocated to activities judged to build prestige in order to secure recognition for the desired status. In the cases analysed in the preceding chapters, this process had been established for a number of years, and was marked by a conservative allocation of resources and risk-return calculation. In the status crisis phase, a combination of threat, time pressure, and

uncertainty forces a revaluation of the state's status self-perceptions. The cases highlighted that this crisis frequently reveals or highlights key information, which further prompts these revaluations. In the final phase of enhanced status seeking, states pursue the same status goals but with a greater appetite for risk. The cases showed examples emphasising the provocative, assertive, but also sometimes counter-intuitive nature of the new approach.

The case studies were used to look for the role of status as a causal factor in events, and the research was narrowly focused on this question. As a result, there were many puzzles involving status in IR that the project was "not" about: it used cases where status concerns was already considered likely to have played a role, rather than trying to find out whether status concerns were present; it was about how status worked, not whether status was the leading or only cause of events; and it was about self-perceptions of status as a factor in policy outcomes, not the effects of the perceptions of others or whether the state won or lost status due to the events of the case study. Having set all those aside, what the narrow focus did allow was the chance to identify one major causal process. The thesis' central argument about the role of status crises outlines a process involving status concerns as a causal factor, that works in specific ways that can be empirically analysed and theorised more generally.

Review of findings

The following review of findings includes a brief summary of the findings of the three country cases, involving Japan, China and India. In addition, two findings are reviewed that were observed across all the cases: the importance of medium-term context in terms

of the onset of status crises; and the role of conflicting internal and external agendas upon the effectiveness of national responses to status concerns.

Findings of each case

Japan and the United Nations Security Council, 1992-93:

This case built on the idea that Japanese cultural factors, the history of international status playing an important domestic political function, and sharp variations in material circumstances since modernisation all meant that Tokyo's status-seeking was focused on international institutions. The balance between seeking "dignity", recognition of achievements, and maintaining domestic agendas meant that the prize of a permanent UNSC seat was pursued conservatively. The status crisis that arose after the 1990-91 Gulf War was shown to have revealed significant new information: the ineffectiveness of Japan's strategies to that date; the new power and influence of the UNSC in world politics; and the potential for a UNSC role to spearhead wider domestic political reforms back in Japan. The case highlighted the more provocative strategy that followed during the 1992-93 intensification of Japan's UNSC bid.

A key finding of the Japan case study was that the status crisis played a critical role in revealing information that influenced status perceptions. In line with Rose and Friedberg's conceptualisation of crises as "perceptual shocks",¹ the post-Gulf War crisis for Japan's status forced decision-makers to reassess both the benefits and the costs of a permanent UNSC seat. The crisis revealed that the Security Council had become a powerful actor in world politics, with its veto-wielding permanent members now holding real power over global security. For Japan, permanent membership would

¹ See references on p.95.

rectify the humiliation of being sidelined during the Gulf War, and hand it a major international roles which could flow back to encourage a domestic reform agenda. But the case study showed that the process of securing status recognition through the UNSC seat would also require Japan to accept commensurate international responsibility. The latter would be no surprise to scholars in the English School tradition who have long emphasised that great powers achieve status recognition by consequence of assuming significant burdens, especially the provision of public goods such as international security.² But it was fatal to the bid that Japan's domestic political system was not yet ready for the burden of status. Even though the crisis had caused many decision-makers to embrace a more assertive and provocative UNSC bid, the risks were too high for an ill-prepared Japanese polity to accept, and the bid was allowed to lose momentum.

China and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty 1996:

This case began with a focus on China's pursuit of status roles as an emerging great power and a leader of the developing world. A key part of the narrative was the way the additional role of legitimate nuclear weapons state influenced both the first two roles. In the decade from 1979, China had gradually changed its attitude toward arms control and the nonproliferation regime from outright rejection to acceptance of nonproliferation norms. The effect of the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident on China's status was dramatic, and prompted a much wider engagement with international institutions in order to protect the domestic economic reform agenda. The literature on the effects of Tiananmen is extensive and addresses concepts such as the greater socialisation of Chinese decision-makers, but a gap remained as to why those decision-makers were so concerned about international pressure, which had not previously restrained their behaviour.

² These responsibilities are described by Evelyn Goh and David Lake at p.56 above.

The Tiananmen incident was the clear cause of a status crisis, although the effects were more drawn-out than in the other cases. Beijing responded at first defensively, then around 1993 saw positive signs in the end of the MFN-human rights linkage issue, then in 1995 saw a return of acute threats to status. However, the 1995-96 issues showed that China's status roles could be threatened in two ways: the upsurge in "China threat" debates due to the tensions on the Taiwan Strait indicated perceptions that China's status role as a legitimate great power were in jeopardy; meanwhile, the unprecedented wave of criticism from non-aligned countries over nuclear testing was a similar threat to the role of leader of the developing world. The fact that China ultimately agreed to bind itself by signing the costly treaty was an action that existing status literature would associate with the behaviour of a legitimate major power. John Ikenberry notes that newly emerged power imbalances need special efforts to restore order; new major powers therefore agree to "restrain power, reassure weaker potential rivals, and establish commitments."³ It was arguably an outcome of the status crisis that China recognised the need to behave in this way. The case study therefore contributed to the existing literature by demonstrating the role of a status crisis in changing Chinese perceptions of its status roles.

India and the Pokhran II nuclear tests, 1998:

The final case study examined India in the pursuit of multiple status roles, in particular those of aspirant great power and of normative exemplar. It emphasised that India had pursued various aspects of prestige, including forms of autonomy and a longstanding nuclear research program. The case highlighted that the balance between these roles ensured moderation in the pursuit of each. The case put the decision in the context of

³ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 8. See additional observations by Ikenberry at p.59 above.

the immediate post-Cold War period, when India was sensitive to status concerns thanks to economic difficulties and the demise of the Soviet Union. New Delhi then perceived a threat to its status as the indefinite extension of the NPT and the entry into force provisions of the CTBT threatened to curtail its nuclear program. Indian elites considered this to be tantamount to cutting off India's future as an autonomous great power. The conclusion of CTBT negotiations put urgent pressure on India, and demonstrated that there would be a significant cost of inaction.

A key finding of the case concerned the effect that the status crisis had upon domestic political opinion and as a result India's status choices. India had valued autonomy and, for a combination of pragmatic and moralistic reasons, had long been a strong voice against nuclear weapons. But the status crisis saw a strong consensus emerge in India in favour of autonomy represented by a declaration of being a nuclear weapons state. This can be conceptualised as a narrowing of status objectives; with status goals no longer balancing each other, policy could focus more intensively on aspirations to great power status.

General findings

Two additional themes recurred across the case studies and are detailed here. They are not included within the central argument of the thesis, but they may describe permissive conditions that allowed status concerns to play the roles observed in the cases.

One general finding was that status crises occurred after periods in which decision-makers perceived themselves to be operating in a less hospitable international environment. The backdrop to each case showed a similar situation where each state

was involved in a medium-term (5-10 year) period of international decline, pressure or uncertainty. It is true that there is an element of case selection bias involved in this issue because one of the reasons the cases were chosen was because of their early post-Cold War time period. This was deliberate on account of the significant changes to global polarity at that time that could be expected to expose new status roles and situations. However, there was consistency in that the states were mostly facing similar negative situations. India had experienced the shock of losing its major ally, the USSR, and was suffering a prolonged economic crisis which Indian officials close to Prime Minister Rao considered to be a real factor in the decision to postpone nuclear tests in 1995. For Japan, the feeling that the Gulf War was just a taste of the problems facing the country was highlighted in the Ozawa report, which considered that a wholesale policy of reform was necessary for Japan to defend its hard-won prosperity. In China's case, this medium-term period of uncertainty was subsumed into the status crisis itself. While the case study emphasised spikes in status concerns during 1995-96, it is clear that the crisis overall for China began in 1989. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that China's status crisis was so serious because it was brought on by a combination of Tiananmen and the fall of the USSR, not the former alone. Looking at all three cases, it is clear that a greater context of vulnerability or uncertainty played a major role in making the status crises so serious.

A second general finding concerns internal and external influences on national responses to the status crisis. The cases revealed interesting contrasts between these influences: in Japan, efforts to enhance pursuit of the UNSC bid ran into not only external opposition, but also internal resistance. India's situation was the reverse, with international opposition to its nuclear testing outweighed by what became strong domestic consensus in favour. China, meanwhile, enjoyed both domestic (the backing

of most bureaucratic actors including the scientific establishment, although not the military) and international support for signing the CTBT, which made it easier for decision-makers to accept a treaty that carried security costs. The detail of the findings helps address the question of why, given the zero-sum nature of status, status-seeking ever encounters domestic opposition or wins international support. Domestic opposition, in the Japanese case, arose because the status crisis was so effective at revealing information and forcing a revaluation of the UNSC seat's value that domestic constituencies concluded that the prize came at too high a price. International support for China's bid occurred because China had become established within a status role as a leader of the developing world and as an aspiring legitimate great power. It was not only in the interest of the developing world to encourage China to continue in that role, but also for the West to encourage China to continue on a path to "responsibility". These factors helped explain seemingly puzzling status outcomes.

Analysing variables

The status crisis is the central event that forces the revaluation of status perceptions. As an independent variable, this change in perception of status is what drives outcomes in the form of new policies on status-seeking – in these cases, in the form of enhanced status seeking to rectify the negative impact of an unexpected shock. In the three cases studied, the change of perceptions took multiple practical forms. These included: the effect of clarifying the multiple status roles that a state might simultaneously pursue; serving to reveal new information that significantly affects values and choices regarding

status-seeking strategies; and shifting domestic political factors to make new calculations of status interests possible.

Clarifying multiple roles

A key finding is that states' multiple status roles made a significant difference to the outcome of the cases. It was noted earlier in the thesis that recognition for status may come in the form of membership of various privileged groups.⁴ These groups represent countless role identities, and many are associated with status ambitions. For example, in one study K.J. Holsti counted no fewer than 17 types of "national role conceptions," such as regional leader, "bastion of revolution-liberator", "active independent," and so on. Holsti recognised that states could have multiple roles and, for example, assigned five roles to Canada.⁵ Indeed the fact that states may have multiple simultaneous roles has been theorised as "role strain": "Social actors often exhibit role conflict when they hold multiple social identities and there are contrary expectations attached to some positions in a social relationship."⁶

In this study, however, the outcome of multiple status roles or identity-holding did not appear to be strain so much as conservatism. It would be inevitable that some of the roles proposed by Holsti would be thrust upon states somewhat unwillingly. But this study was focused on valued status roles that states chose to pursue with some deliberation. The result was not contradiction but an apparent awareness of the trade-offs required in order to work toward multiple roles concurrently. This became a self-

⁴ See the list by Clunan at p.10, and discussion of major powers at pp.53-57 above.

⁵ K.J. Holsti, 'National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy,' *International Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (1970): 256.

⁶ Bruce Cronin, 'The Paradox of Hegemony: America's Ambiguous Relationship with the United Nations,' *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (2001): 111.

moderating activity as states would not allow the pursuit of one status goal to drain resources from another or put another at risk. This helps to explain the risk-averse and incremental nature of the normal status-seeking phase.

The status crisis disrupts this naturally self-balancing process.⁷ Decision-makers find their state's interests more sharply clarified by the crisis, helping to define which status goals should have priority. Gradual or long-term changes are suddenly revealed, indicating whether longstanding goals should be jettisoned or reprioritised. Internal disagreements are subdued and actors become more willing to innovate in status goals. As with other aspects of crises, the threat of loss makes decision-makers more acceptant of risks.⁸ As an example, in the Indian case study it was remarkable to see rival political parties, and even individual politicians with a lifetime of anti-nuclear activism behind them, swing behind support for the single goal of Indian autonomous status. Once the crisis had overtaken trade-offs and balance, the state could pursue a single goal far more boldly than before.

Crisis as a discovery process

One of the most interesting findings of the project concerned the importance of the status crisis as a point of information discovery. It was explained in the conceptual framework that a crisis can be expected to act as a “perceptual shock”, revealing preferences, crystallising long-term changes in circumstances, and forcing new valuations based on more clearly demonstrated action. What was interesting was the finding about just how many kinds of information would be involved. These included: forcing revaluation of prestige-building strategies, including whether the objectives

⁷ For the status crisis, see p.19, and for characteristics of crises see pp.95-98 above.

⁸ See the discussion of prospect theory below.

carried high costs as well as benefits; revealing the extent of threats brought on by the status crisis, and therefore the costs of not taking action; the ineffectiveness of existing strategies; the actor's changed status roles; and the position of different bureaucratic players. This was particularly important considering that the independent variable of the study, changed perceptions of status, did not require discovery of a state's exact status – only that its status had changed.

Domestic constituencies

That domestic politics should be a significant intervening variable is not a surprise to the scholarship on status, or indeed in IR in general. The surprising aspect was the specific role that domestic politics played. The existing literature assumes that national status is felt by domestic audiences in the form of positive feelings, so they should encourage prestige-building policies. Pu and Schweller's chapter on conspicuous consumption as an example of a two-level game is typical of this. Instead, domestic constituencies behaved in different ways. To be sure, the China case was not surprising on the issue. The case study noted that most domestic constituencies had lined up behind the CTBT, smoothing the way to the decision to sign. However, the Japanese and Indian cases showed interesting roles of domestic politics.

In the Japan case, the crisis around the Gulf War caused an overall revaluing of a permanent UNSC seat. It had a complex interaction with domestic politics. First, politicians saw the opportunity to continue a longstanding practice of using external political pressures as justification for contentious reform programs at home. As the Gulf War revealed the Security Council to be, compared with during the Cold War, a more significant actor in world politics, it was held up as a major vehicle for far-reaching

domestic political reform. Second, the same revelations about the Council's role convinced many in Japan that membership would not simply deliver diplomatic privilege, but would also demand a high level of responsibility in the form of contributions to peacekeeping operations. As noted above in regards to national role conceptions, to be a permanent member of an activist UNSC would indeed bring significant status, but the status role would also have to be emphatically performed for status recognition to be maintained. This was a case where the information-revealing aspects of the status crisis caused domestic audiences to deem a status goal no longer to meet a cost-benefit equation. Third, behaviour appeared to be influenced by bureaucratic politics. The Foreign Ministry had argued for the UNSC bid for many years, yet the Gulf crisis revealed that its strategy in the UN had been quite ineffective. Stung by the criticism, the Ministry became the strongest advocate for the bid and pushed it hard during 1992-93. It was an interesting example of the prestige of a bureaucratic actor being at stake, and influencing the outcomes in the pursuit of national prestige.

Implications of findings

Implications for scholarly IR

There are several implications of the findings for IR scholarship. These concern the study of prestige and status themselves; concern about authority and hierarchy; clarifying instrumental or inherent motivations; and the field of social identity theory (SIT). There were also several concepts that the findings showed could be valuable but

were not topics of this project, and they are discussed below under the heading of potential future research.

The use of prestige and status as causal factors immediately encountered the debate about whether these are measurable, or indeed are simply references to other IR concepts such as power. The key distinction is that while both are intersubjective ideas, prestige is a higher order of belief and is arrived at through judgements about the beliefs of others, not a single actor's assessments. This has significant implications for the way the subject is studied in IR. For example, the case findings were broadly in line with the concepts outlined from the existing literature about states trying to attain prestige related to diverse positive attributes. Each of the three case studies showed that there are as many forms of prestige-building as there are status roles to claim. The question therefore is not whether a particular policy actually delivers perceptions of positive value, but whether observers think the community of observers is likely to view the policy as delivering positive value. This means that the subject of investigation is not only the merits of the policy, but how easily it can be observed, and whether observers believe that it can be easily observed.

Some scholars, such as Renshon, highlight war as a “public, dramatic, and salient” event, which makes it a particularly strong candidate for an action that will alter status.⁹ However, this thesis has studied a wide range of non-conflictual policies being employed in the pursuit of status. We have seen that status recognition is a form of negotiation, which states can influence through many prestige-building means such as their own claims to status, expenditure on costly status symbols, acquiring institutional privileges, or through policies other than war that are still public and communicate a

⁹ Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War,’ 534.

clean break with past positions. An overarching finding of the project is that this prestige-building normally involves trade-offs with other state goals, or indeed among competing status goals. Put this way, it is clear that war is a dramatic policy solution that involves enormous costs and risks. There is no doubt that states have historically accepted such a gamble in the pursuit of status. However, we should consider that in the contemporary world, where war is increasingly uncommon, states would consider a very wide range of possibilities before embarking on war for status purposes.¹⁰ The thesis demonstrated just a few of the possibilities that are available.

The findings provide one way to address the major claim in the literature that “the search for status will cause people to behave in ways that directly contradict their material interest in security and/or prosperity.”¹¹ The major finding was that status-seeking was consistent with a model in which status is sought because it establishes general expectations about deference. In each of the case studies, the status goal sought would come at some economic or national security cost. To take just the Indian example, a good deal of literature argues that nuclear testing was harmful in national security terms.¹² But decision-makers saw a clear national benefit: for instance, the former Indian Foreign Secretary Salman Haider said that thanks to the tests “we are now members at the top table... people feel more confident.”¹³ It was clear that India had pursued non-alignment and normative leadership under some guise since independence as a pragmatic way for a poor, developing country to guard its sovereignty.

¹⁰ For a study of the decreasing occurrence of war, see: John Mueller, ‘War Has Almost Ceased to Exist: An Assessment,’ *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 2 (2009).

¹¹ Discussed at p.62 above. Wohlforth, ‘Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War,’ 35.

¹² Discussed at p.207 above, see: Mistry, ‘The Unrealized Promise of International Institutions.’

¹³ Salman Haider, interview by the author, 14 September, 2016.

Similar points could be made about the other cases: Japanese interest in prestigious institutional roles stemmed from the need to active promote what it believed to be its “achieved status”, because Japan’s material circumstances changed so rapidly; likewise, China needed to neutralise the “China threat” issue in order to maintain unimpeded domestic economic growth, vital to regime survival.

Overall, this finding suggests that IR should consider the pursuit of prestige and status as complementary rather than contradictory to security and prosperity. Establishing favourable expectations of deference is one way states would ensure long-term security and prosperity. This is no different from the way that any state guards its security to ensure prosperity and vice-versa. All form part of the trade-offs that are necessary in any kind of foreign policymaking.

Addressing the key theme of social identity theory (SIT), the thesis found the various status-seeking strategies the theory proposes to be quite useful. Much of the behaviour observed in the cases was consistent with SIT concepts such as social competition, emulation and creativity. Creative approaches to status indeed appeared to be the main way that states looked to overcome major status obstacles. India, for example, had pursued the creative strategy of non-aligned leadership for many decades, avoiding either subordination to or direct competition with the major powers.

On the other hand, the study did not find specific support for SIT’s propositions regarding the motivations for seeking status. In each of the case studies, the prospect of establishing expectations of deference appeared to be more immediate motivations for status-seeking. In addition, SIT proposes that people are motivated by gaining self-

esteem from attaining high status for their group relative to others,¹⁴ but some of the findings contradicted this. For example, SIT suggests that domestic audiences would be strong proponents of status-seeking policies. In the Japan case study, however, domestic audiences proved to have the reverse role. Rather than strongly advocating for Japan to win recognition with the prize of a UNSC seat, domestic constituencies were concerned about the costs involved, and their pressure was a reason why Japan shrank from its bid.

The explanation for this finding can be found when we place status in the wider context with which it has been studied in IR, rather than leaning too heavily on findings in social psychology. Rather than just seeing status as a provider of self-esteem, IR has long been aware that “with great power comes great responsibility.”¹⁵ High status in IR is not merely a claim but a recognition, and a community will not surrender privileges to a high-status aspirant unless the latter performs services such as building order, providing international public goods, and preserving security. It appeared that Japanese domestic audiences were capable of assessing both the costs and benefits of the UNSC role, which was why it was unable to gain consensus support in Japan at the time.

Implications for policy

Scholarly IR concepts and theories are thoroughly avoided by most policymakers, yet as Robert Keohane writes, they are impossible to avoid because “reality has to be ordered into categories, and relationships drawn between events.”¹⁶ For its part, this research project has applied existing scholarly literature on status to three real-world case studies, in which policymakers applied themselves to status concerns to the best of their

¹⁴ See pp.63-64 above.

¹⁵ Quoting David Lake: see p.56, note 68.

¹⁶ Robert O. Keohane, 'Realism, Neorealism and the Study of World Politics,' in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (Columbia University Press, 1986), 4.

ability. The topics that carry the greatest implications for policy are to do with the fact that this project has been a study of crises. Policymakers may not be overly concerned with IR theories, but they do worry about crises: Lebow refers to the “intense psychological strain” of crises; while Allison refers to the way that while learning occurs gradually over time, “dramatic organizational change occurs in response to major crises.”¹⁷

Some lessons from this research could aid policymakers in anticipating or at least managing situations of status crisis. The first is that status crises are mostly preceded by periods of perceived vulnerability. As examples, the Suez crisis was so serious for British and French prestige because both countries had faced a serious decline in their material circumstances post-war. For a contemporary example, it is worth noting the literature that suggests China believes US prestige has been in decline since the Global Financial Crisis.¹⁸ Future scenarios could involve a stalling in Chinese economic growth or a contraction in the Japanese economy. Security-related concerns could involve a Japan left isolated by a less engaged United States, or India constrained between China and nuclear-armed Pakistan. These would make the three states again vulnerable to a status crisis.

Policymakers need also to be aware that states can be difficult to escape from or ignore status roles. The reason for this is that status is conferred by recognition, but as noted above, recognition involves the full range of expectations, not only of deference but also of responsibility. As Cameron Thies argues, “If states attempt to adopt foreign policy

¹⁷ Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, 12; Graham T. Allison, ‘Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis,’ *American Political Science Review* 63, no. 3 (1969): 698.

¹⁸ David Shambaugh, ‘Chinese Thinking About World Order,’ in *China and the International System : Becoming a World Power*, ed. Xiaoming Huang and Robert G. Patman (Routledge, 2013), 26; Dingding Chen, Xiaoyu Pu, and Alastair Iain Johnston, ‘Debating China’s Assertiveness,’ *International Security* 38, no. 3 (2014): 179.

roles that are inconsistent with their master status, then socialisation activity will occur on behalf of structure to prevent the enactment of these roles.”¹⁹ An example in the case studies was China’s situation during the final negotiation of the CTBT. While China was not yet formally constrained by the treaty, it had developed a status role as a leader of the developing world, which was intensely supportive of nuclear nonproliferation and arms control.

This topic lends itself to hypothetical policy scenarios. One of the most important in the contemporary context would be any crisis that threatens China’s rise. The backdrop for such a scenario would likely be a medium-term deterioration in China’s position relative to the international environment. This might involve an economic slowdown or it could involve a pattern of regional powers shifting to balance or contain China. A status crisis would then threaten a key status goal such as the role of regional great power in Asia. Nick Bisley has explained that China is unlikely to be satisfied with demands it accept US primacy: “The century of shame and humiliation retains strong political salience because of its role in the CCP’s domestic narrative. For Beijing, finding a regional order with which it’s content requires those deeper issues of prestige and honour to be satisfied, as well as its interests.”²⁰ The lessons of this thesis are that while the response to a status crisis need not involve war, it is likely to involve more provocative and risky policy choices.

The way of avoiding such an outcome, meanwhile, would be a form of status accommodation.²¹ While major power transitions need not be peaceful, there are also strong incentives for rising powers not to disrupt the status quo. Ikenberry has noted

¹⁹ Cameron G. Thies, *The United States, Israel and the Search for International Order : Socializing States*, Role Theory and International Relations (New York, New York: Routledge, 2013), 46.

²⁰ Nick Bisley, 'Honour, Prestige and Restraint,' *The Strategist*, 4 August 2014.

²¹ See p.66 above.

that rising powers may find it attractive to adopt status quo institutions because their “stickiness” is just as beneficial for new powers as it is for old ones.²² The key to this is to have institutions that are sufficiently open that they can adjust to meet the status aspirations of the rising power. Flexible institutions are beneficial for both sides because they let the existing hegemon accommodate the rising power’s status concerns.²³

Topics for future research

Beliefs

A key aspect of each of the case studies was a narrative in which crises threatened status aspirations. The project noted that these status aspirations are the product of history and culture, but further research could go further to try to locate the source of status beliefs. Existing IR research programs have looked at beliefs both from the point of view of individual mind-sets, and in terms of national cultures.

At the individual level, IR and strategic studies have long studied decision-makers’ beliefs under the heading of “operational codes” (which could also be called ‘world-views’, *Weltanschauung*, or “cognitive maps”).²⁴ As revised and presented by Alexander George, Stephen Walker and others, an operational code is a way a decision-maker’s beliefs can be classified according to both their broad philosophy of the nature

²² Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*.

²³ T. V. Paul and Mahesh Shankar, ‘Status Accommodation through Institutional Means: India’s Rise and the Global Order,’ in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 175.

²⁴ Alexander L. George, ‘The “Operational Code”: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making,’ *International Studies Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1969): 197.

of politics and conflict, and their more pragmatic beliefs about how to effectively solve political problems.

The idea of an “operational code” dates from early Cold War efforts to discover the rules followed by Soviet leaders in international conduct.²⁵ In 1969, Alexander George revived the term with a much broader meaning, referring to the way that foreign policymakers direct policy not so much at the outside world, but at the “image of the outside world” that exists in their minds.²⁶

They serve, as it were, as a prism that influences the actor’s perceptions and diagnoses of the flow of political events, his definitions and estimates of particular situations. These beliefs also provide norms, standards, and guidelines that influence the actor’s choice of strategy and tactics, his structuring and weighing of alternative courses of action. Such a belief system influences, but does not unilaterally determine, decision-making; it is an important, but not the only, variable that shapes decision-making behavior.²⁷

George applied the term very generally to politics. It encompassed “central” beliefs which, unlike attitudes to immediate problems, “are concerned with fundamental, unchanging issues of politics and political action.”²⁸ These codes or “cognitive maps” of the world consisted of the policymaker’s core beliefs about history and the nature of politics, which regularly intrude upon practical problem-solving.

As described, these cognitive maps take the form of intervening variables between events and policy decisions, and in that way correspond to the neoclassical realist paradigm. As guides to decision-makers’ thinking about fundamental matters of politics, they have considerable relevance to the idea that decisions would fit into underlying beliefs about a state’s status roles.

²⁵ Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo* (New York: RAND Corporation/McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1951), xi.

²⁶ George, ‘The “Operational Code”,’ 190-91.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Alexander L. George, ‘The Causal Nexus between Cognitive Beliefs and Decision-Making Behaviour: The ‘Operational Code’ Belief System,’ in *Psychological Models in International Politics*, ed. Lawrence S. Falkowski (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), 99.

Indeed the literature states that operational code beliefs are especially relevant in uncertain situations where leaders face scarce or contradictory information, and stressful situations where decision-makers are pressured or under emotional strain.²⁹ They help decision-makers cope with the limits of rational decision-making: assisting them when information is incomplete, it is difficult to balance ends with means, or they cannot reliably determined the criteria for the best course of action.³⁰ These would all be consistent with decision-making under conditions of a status crisis.

Whereas operational codes concern deeply-held beliefs of individuals, an alternative approach to beliefs is to say that the behaviour of states is shaped by its culture. With a focus on security behaviour, this is known as “strategic culture”, which is typically seen as adding another layer of causation to strategic decisions; while traditional variables such as material factors and the role of individuals remain important, strategic culture gives “context to how elite decision-makers “understand their strategic environment and the value, purpose, and limitations ascribed to their national power.”³¹

The literature on strategic culture proposes that each state has a possibly unique “cognitive inheritance”, with sources ranging from macro-societal factors such as geography, history and culture, to the nature of the state, such as its regime type, economy, and worldview of elites, to intra-state elements such as its institutions and the nature of civil-military relations.³² In addition, just as we saw that operational codes

²⁹ Stephen G Walker, ‘The Motivational Foundations of Political Belief Systems: A Re-Analysis of the Operational Code Construct,’ *International Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (1983): 180.

³⁰ George, ‘The "Operational Code",’ 197-98.

³¹ Ashley J. Tellis, ‘Understanding Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific,’ in *Strategic Asia 2016-17: Understanding Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2016), 7.

³² *Ibid.*, 8, 18-19.

could bound the rationality of leaders in difficult or novel situations, cultural factors can help to bridge the gaps between rational choice theories and outcomes seen in real-world cases.

The major difficulties with both individual-level operational codes and society-level strategic cultures is that it is hard to determine causality. For example, it can be hard to find any decision that is not explained by strategic culture, or to what extent it is determined by that or other variables. Even with considerable methodological work by Johnston,³³ it remains unclear whether culture can even be separated as a variable in the analysis of behaviour.³⁴ Colin Gray, for example, argues that instead it is better to simply understand culture surrounding and weaving together all decisions.³⁵

It would simplify the study of status if we could easily use operational codes or strategic cultures to predict the kinds of status goals decision-makers will choose. Unfortunately, separating these beliefs from other factors may be a fruitless task. In order to better understand status decisions, however, it is worth using one scholar's verdict on cultural issues: strategic culture is useful if it "constitutes and gives meaning to the material variables that realist theories typically rely on for explanation."³⁶ There may be scope for further research into these topics, but it is likely that beliefs of these kinds are simply another way of explaining all foreign policy decisions.

³³ Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Thinking About Strategic Culture,' *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 45.

³⁴ See: Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 129, 148.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁶ Stuart Poore, 'What Is the Context? A Reply to the Gray-Johnston Debate on Strategic Culture,' *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 283.

A more recent take on individual beliefs, which tries to answer questions similar to the ones investigated in this project, is Jacques Hymans's idea of "national identity conceptions." Hymans argues that big decisions, such as the acquisition of nuclear weapons, stem from more than just material cost-benefit calculations. Instead, Hymans build on the operational code literature to say that decisions – especially non-routine, uncertain, high-level ones – are made subject to leaders' core values and "disposition."³⁷ These dispositions amount to national identity conceptions: "an individual's understanding of the nation's identity - his or her sense of *what the nation naturally stands for* and of *how high it naturally stands*, in comparison to others in the international arena."³⁸

The national identity conception, Hymans argues, is not merely a biased perception of reality, but a belief about what is "natural", such as a leader's instinctive feeling about his or her country's role. For instance, Charles de Gaulle declared an instinctive feeling that "France cannot be France without greatness."³⁹ Hymans sees national identity conceptions as both a personal belief that leaders absorb from wider debates, as well as (notably in the case of Nehru and India) an influence that they create and disseminate within their political community. He in turn argued that leaders consider national identity in comparison with other states, and then create a "national role conception". Based on leaders' beliefs about their nations' status and competitiveness with the rest of

³⁷ Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*, 17.

³⁸ Ibid., 18. Emphasis in original.

³⁹ Ibid., 19-20.

the world, Hymans created a typology of national behaviour on the subject of nuclear proliferation.⁴⁰

The questions that Hymans asks above are highly relevant to the study of status perceptions as a causal factor in policy. They outline a basic issue that frequently recurred in the fieldwork interviews for this project. Each of the case studies involved states that at least aspire to major power roles, yet to ask experts in each country, the answer was often similar to de Gaulle's statement about France. This suggests that at some level, a combination of individual "codes", culture, or concepts such as national identity conceptions help to form decision-makers' mind-sets and influence policy outcomes.

It remains, however, difficult to use these mind-sets to analyse decisions. Some scholars have commented that Hymans' gives very similar results to the security model of international relations, albeit discussed in social-psychological terms.⁴¹ Still, further research could provide ways to operationalise these approaches to decision-makers' beliefs.

Prospect theory

This study found that decision-makers have strong beliefs about their state's standing as a starting point or benchmark that should be maintained. In addition, interviewees indicated that any threat to their state's existing standing is taken seriously – suggesting that any fall in status is a serious concern. This immediately suggests a model in which

⁴⁰ Ibid., 21-25.

⁴¹ A point made by Keir A. Lieber in reviewing Hymans. *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (Feb., 2007), pp. 254-256.

decision-makers seem much more concerned about losses than about gains, and this suggests links to the psychology literature about prospect theory. Prospect theory is a psychological model suggesting that actors value their existing goods more highly than goods they do not yet possess, so that they are relatively averse to losses. It is a theory that “individuals tend to be risk-averse in a domain of gains, or when things are going well, and relatively risk seeking in a domain of losses, as when a leader is in the middle of a crisis.”⁴² Relative to an actor’s reference point, the theory predicts that a prospective gain will seem of less value than a prospective loss, even if a so-called rational valuation of each should be the same.⁴³

Research in political psychology suggests leaders will take more risks to protect their international positions, including their reputations, than they would do to enhance these reputations. Indeed after suffering losses, leaders “have a tendency not to accommodate to those losses but instead to take excessive risks to recover them.”⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Levy notes, states expend greater resources trying to defend a status quo against a particular loss, than they would trying to enhance their position by the same amount.⁴⁵ The psychology behind this is simply that “losing hurts more than a comparable gain pleases.”⁴⁶

Prospect theory has already attracted considerable interest in areas of security studies such as coercion and deterrence. It is mentioned in discussions of contemporary Asia-Pacific security problems such as North Korea’s nuclear arsenal or disputes over the

⁴² Rose McDermott, *Risk-Taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 18.

⁴³ Jack S. Levy, 'Interstate War and Peace,' in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A Simmons (SAGE Publications Limited, 2013), 595.

⁴⁴ Jack S. Levy, 'Prospect Theory, Rational Choice, and International Relations,' *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1997): 93.

⁴⁵ Jack S. Levy, 'Applications of Prospect Theory to Political Science,' *Synthese*, no. 135 (2003): 225-26.

⁴⁶ McDermott, *Risk-Taking in International Politics*, 29.

East China Sea.⁴⁷ However, there are obstacles to using the theory as a tool of analysis. The main problem is that the theory centres on actors' beliefs about reference points, which change based on the actors' gains and losses. Thus Levy notes: "If we cannot identify the reference point independently of the behaviour we are trying to explain, then prospect theory and its key hypotheses cannot be tested and have no explanatory power."⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the strong indications given by the interviewees, and by the research of this project generally, suggest that the ideas behind prospect theory are particularly relevant to status concerns. There would therefore be value in developing new approaches to prospect theory that inform IR's research into status.

Final comments

This project, focused as it is on prestige, status and perceptions, is essentially a discussion of ideas. It has discussed situations where states are forced to change their basic thinking about their role, purposes, and circumstances. Such basic thinking is difficult to change, involving the full range of international relationships, domestic political pressures and bureaucratic agendas. It requires a crisis to change such thinking; indeed, as one recent study of the role of ideas in politics said, "change comes when conditions make it possible for new ideas to trump *both* vested interests and long-held beliefs."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ For example, respectively: Gary Schaub, 'Deterrence, Compellence, and Prospect Theory,' *Political Psychology* 25, no. 3 (2004); Christensen, *The China Challenge*, 106.

⁴⁸ Levy, 'Prospect Theory, Rational Choice, and International Relations,' 99.

⁴⁹ Wayne A. Leighton and Edward J. López, *Madmen, Intellectuals, and Academic Scribblers : The Economic Engine of Political Change* (Stanford, California: Stanford Economics and Finance, an imprint of Stanford University Press, 2013), 7. Emphasis in original.

Possibly the most important contribution of this research is to bring forward the notion of a status crisis. The action of the crisis in turn highlights three key ideas that relate to the process by which status perceptions have causal effect.

The first major idea is that prestige, which is a central good being sought in order to achieve status aims, is a higher-order belief – a belief about what is generally believed in the group as a whole, not an assessment of the beliefs of each individual observer. This frees a great deal of complexity from efforts to study how it is measured, valued or changes. Rather than having to judge whether a policy is “best” for delivering positive values to the state, decision-makers need only select policies that they consider are generally thought to be valuable. It means that the process of normal prestige-building needs to be as much about “advertising” prestige as it is acquiring it.

A second major idea is that in response to the crisis, and in order to change self-perceptions of their state’s status, decision-makers do not need to make absolute valuations, but need only observe change. This project studied examples of this aided by the role that crises play in exposing information and crystallising long-term trends. The way that the case studies showed that crises deliver a wide range of information suggests that self-perception of changed status is rapid. It was also clear that change is perceived across a range of constituencies and causes revaluations of a wide range of status objectives.

The third major idea is that decision-makers may actually think differently about status objectives once the crisis forces them into action. The project assumed that normal status-seeking was driven not by emotions or irrationality, but a “deliberative” mind-set that is conservative and pursues status within bounds of cost-benefit analyses. In a

status crisis, the information delivered, and pressure from key constituencies have combined to press decision-makers to enhance their prestige-building, an “implemental” mind-set allows determined and concerted action. The result is the increased appetite for risk that was observed in each of the case studies.

This research project sits in the context of a distinct “turn” to the study of status in IR. This has created a considerable discussion of status, yet even with the addition of notable books and papers that have appeared since the project began, there has remained a lack of work to operationalise status as a concept. IR has lacked a causal theory of how status concerns may influence results. This study provides one conceptual framework, where cause was observed over a three-phase mechanism of normal status-seeking, status crisis, and enhanced prestige-building. Certainly, this thesis deals with a limited number of case studies situated in a specific time and space. However, the project has applied the empirical findings to broader conceptual discussion, to draw out factors that are more generalisable than the historical outcomes alone. Based on this, we can expect that in situations where states encounter crises of status, those states are likely to respond by embarking on new, unexpectedly assertive and even provocative new policy directions.

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Name of interviewee	Place and date interviewed	Most relevant roles
Nobusama Akiyama	Tokyo, 17 March 2016	Lecturer, Hitotsubashi University
Kiyotaka Akasaka	Tokyo, 25 December 2015	Former UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information
Dipankar Banerjee	New Delhi, 8 September 2016	Director, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies
Naresh Chandra	New Delhi, 7 September 2016	Former Indian Cabinet Secretary, 1990-92, Ambassador to Washington, 1996-2001
Raj Chengappa	New Delhi, 9 September 2016	Editorial Director, India Today Group, author of <i>Weapons of peace: The secret story of India's quest to be a nuclear power</i> (HarperCollins, 2000)
Sebastian von Einsiedel	Tokyo, 4 April 2016	Director, UN University - Centre for Policy Research (UNU-CPR)
Fan Jishe	Beijing, 22 March 2016	Deputy Director, Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Salman Haider	New Delhi, 14 September 2016	Indian Foreign Secretary, 1995-97
Yoshio Hatano	Tokyo, 4 April 2016	Japanese Permanent Representative (Ambassador and Head of Mission) to UN, 1989-1994
Daigaku Higashi	Tokyo, 20 November 2015	Associate Professor Human Security Program (Peacebuilding), University of Tokyo
Takashi Inoguchi	Tokyo, 14 March 2016	Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo
Shinichi Kitaoka	Tokyo, 15 March 2016	President, Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Deputy Permanent Representative to UN, 2004-06.
Li Bin	Beijing, 22 March	Director, Arms Control Program, Tsinghua University, former Chinese arms control

	2016	negotiator
Lalit Mansingh	New Delhi, 8 September 2016	Former Indian Foreign Secretary, 1999-2001
C. Raja Mohan	Canberra, 22 July 2016	Director, Carnegie India
Kenzou Oshima	Tokyo, 22 December 2015	Japanese Permanent Representative to UN, 2004-2007
Kaoru Nemoto	Tokyo, 25 December 2015	Japanese career UN official and Director, UN Information Centre, Tokyo
Tsuneo Nishida	Tokyo, 17 March 2016	Japanese Permanent Representative to UN, 2010-2012
Leela Ponappa	New Delhi, 12 September 2016	Former Indian Deputy National Security Adviser, 2007-09
Yukio Satoh	Tokyo, 15 March 2016	Japanese Permanent Representative to UN, 1998-2002
Sheel Kant Sharma	New Delhi, 13 September 2016	Indian nuclear physicist and former Joint Secretary, Disarmament & International Security Affairs, in Ministry of External Affairs
Shen Dingli	Shanghai, 26 March 2016	Professor and Director of Program on Arms Control and Regional Security, Fudan University
Kanwal Sibal	New Delhi, 13 September 2016	Former Indian Foreign Secretary, 2002-03
Rajiv Sikri	New Delhi, 10 September 2016	Former Indian Secretary (East) in Ministry of External Affairs and author of <i>Challenge and Strategy: Rethinking India's Foreign Policy</i> (2013)
Rakesh Sood	New Delhi, 11 September 2016	Indian nuclear physicist and former ambassador and arms control negotiator
Wu Chunsi	Shanghai, 30 March 2016	Director of the Institute for International Strategic Studies at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies
Xia Liping	Shanghai, 29 March 2016	Dean, School of Political Science and International Relations, Tongji University

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